

## *Introduction*

Italian Renaissance humanism entered its heyday in the second quarter of the fifteenth century. By then it had become a fixture in courts and chanceries all over the peninsula, had gained a sturdy foothold in universities, and had seeped into the consciousness of political and economic elites. Furthermore, Italian humanists could boast of a remarkable array of achievements, having hunted down an impressive number of wholly or partially lost ancient texts, reintroduced Greek to the Latin West, reformed Latin style and orthography to accord with classicizing tastes, and broadly instituted their brand of education in the classics. Finally, they were still relatively impervious to the twin challenges of the vernacular at home and cultural competition from across the Alps, both of which would eventually undermine their hegemony. It was a time of triumph – and of reflection. Having ascended to the apex of culture, Italian humanists turned around to take a view of the path they had trodden. They ruminated on their own education and development, recorded the deeds of the forerunners, founders, and great exponents of the humanist movement, took stock of the goals by which they had been guided, and honored the ideals that had nourished them on their way.

One such piece of humanist self-reflection is provided by Leonardo Bruni, the chancellor of Florence and the undisputed *princeps* of the city's intellectual life, who in old age committed to his *Memoirs* (ca. 1440) an account of his youthful studies, vividly recalling his fateful decision to abandon law and learn Greek with the Byzantine scholar and diplomat Manuel Chrysoloras. Not only would he thus “come face to face with Homer, Plato and Demosthenes . . . and converse with them and become steeped in their marvellous teaching,” but he would also win “useful knowledge” and “abundant pleasure” as well as “enhanced repute,” since “for seven centuries now no one in Italy has cultivated the literature of Greece and yet we recognize that all learning comes from

there.”<sup>1</sup> Bruni then goes on to describe his cohort of fellow students. He singles out the Florentine patricians Roberto de’ Rossi and Palla Strozzi as two who had made the most progress, notes that some students, such as Jacopo Angeli da Scarperia, were of advanced age, and remarks that the logician Pier Paolo Vergerio, although “an ornament of the schools of Padua, was drawn by the reputation of Chrysoloras to come to Florence to study under him there.”<sup>2</sup> In a few, short paragraphs Bruni offers precious testimony about a formative moment in the evolution of humanism: the arrival of Manuel Chrysoloras and the enduring instauration of Greek studies in Italy. This passage holds many further insights for the historian: that Greek was pursued by rich and humble, young and old alike; that the opportunity afforded by Chrysoloras attracted to the city non-Florentines of established reputation in different fields; and that the young Bruni claimed to have been lured away from the assured income of a legal career by an idealistic longing to commune with the ancients.

Bruni’s *Memoirs* are also a valuable source for the way humanists viewed humanism and their involvement in it, giving voice to the passionate zeal for an (initially) unremunerative labor of love, to the regard for revered teachers, to the perceived importance of certain cities, and so on. In another sense, however, a source like the *Memoirs* is wholly unremarkable: it is far from unique. Even a cursory reading of humanist letters, literary prefaces and dedications, ceremonial speeches and poetry, biographies and works of history reveals that their authors enjoyed few things as much as commenting on the content, nature, and what they (usually) considered to be the success of humanism. There were also more formal sources for thinking about humanism, such as necrologies, funeral orations and anthologies, verse compilations in praise of great poets, and dialogues discussing the contributions of leading *literati*.<sup>3</sup> Ultimately, exhaustive accounts and

<sup>1</sup> Leonardo Bruni, *Memoirs [De temporibus suis]*, ed. and tr. James Hankins with D.J.W. Bradley, in Bruni, *History of the Florentine People*, ed. and tr. James Hankins, 3 vols. (Cambridge, Mass., 2001–2007), vol. III, pp. 320–321 (par. 25): “Homerum et Platonem et Demosthenem . . . intueri atque una colloqui ac eorum mirabili disciplina imbui . . . Septingentis iam annis nemo per Italiam graecas litteras tenuit, et tamen doctrinas omnes ab illis esse confitemur. Quanta igitur vel ad cognitionem utilitas vel ad famam accessio vel ad voluptatem cumlatio tibi ex linguae huius cognitione proveniet?” (tr. Bradley).

<sup>2</sup> Bruni, *Memoirs*, pp. 322–323 (par. 26): “cum Patavii studio floreret, secutus Chrysolorae famam, sese Florentiam contulerat ad eum audiendum.”

<sup>3</sup> The following examples are meant only to be indicative, not exhaustive. Necrology: Mauro de Nichilo, *I viri illustres del cod. Vat. lat. 3920* (Rome, 1997). Funeral oration: Poggio Bracciolini, *Oratio funebris in obitu Leonardi Arretini*, in Leonardo Bruni, *Epistolarum libri VIII, recensente Laurentio Mehus (1741)*, ed. James Hankins, 2 vols. (Rome, 2007), vol. I, pp. cxv–cxxvi. Funeral anthology: for the anthology dedicated to the humanist patron Cosimo de’ Medici, see Alison

histories of humanism were even written.<sup>4</sup> Literary self-reflection seems to have been as automatic as it was unceasing in the humanist community.

This book is concerned with that self-reflection and the self-conception of Italian Renaissance humanists embodied therein. By self-conception is intended specifically what humanists thought they were doing *qua* humanists, what they thought the goals of their movement were, what cultural significance it had for them, and how they viewed their common history. The broad aim of this study is to reconsider the nature of humanism without recourse to theoretical or philosophical categories, especially those extraneous to the time period or not identified as relevant by the historical actors themselves. On the contrary, the point is to take humanists on their own terms and thereby to restore as much as possible of the spirit of their movement to the body that has been so thoroughly dissected on the historian's examination table. This approach is motivated by a desire to give humanists, for the first time in a modern historical monograph, the chance to explain themselves, and thereby to contribute to the necessary project of redefining our understanding of Italian Renaissance humanism.

I say necessary because no broad study has yet been undertaken into what humanists thought humanism was. And yet it is a commonplace of historical method that any object of inquiry must first be understood on its own terms before it can be understood on ours.<sup>5</sup> Without concern for this fundamental insight, since World War II scholars have cast humanists as republican ideologues, educational and moral reformers, philosophers and legislators of social norms, devotees of a stylistic ideal, lovers of eloquence,

Brown, "The Humanist Portrait of Cosimo de' Medici, Pater Patriae," *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes*, 24 (1961), pp. 186–221. Verse compilation: *Lacrimae amicorum* in memory of Celso Mellini, on which see Stefano Benedetti, *Ex perfecta antiquorum eloquentia: oratoria e poesia a Roma nel primo Cinquecento* (Rome, 2010), pp. 133–160; Francesco Arsilli, *De poetis urbanis*, in *Coryciana*, ed. Jozef Ijsewijn (Rome, 1997), pp. 341–559, on which see Rosanna Alhaique Pettinelli, "Francesco Arsilli e i 'poeti urbani,'" in Rosanna Alhaique Pettinelli (ed.), *L'umana compagnia: studi in onore di Gennaro Savarese* (Rome, 1999), pp. 27–35. Dialogues: Lapo da Castiglionchio's *De curiae commodis*, in Christopher S. Celenza, *Renaissance Humanism and the Papal Curia: Lapo da Castiglionchio the Younger's De curiae commodis* (Ann Arbor, 1999); Angelo Camillo Decembrio, *De politia litteraria*, ed. Norbert Witten (Munich, 2002). Another formal source was laudatory poems in praise of a given city's great humanists, e.g., Virgilio Zavarise's poem commemorating the humanists of Verona, in G. Banterle, "Il carne di Virgilio Zavarise *cum enumeratione poetarum oratorumque veronensium*," *Atti e memorie dell'Accademia di Agricoltura, Scienze, e Lettere di Verona*, s. VI, 26 (1974–1975), pp. 121–170. For further types of sources and examples, see Rosanna Alhaique Pettinelli, "Presenze eterodosse in cataloghi di letterati della prima metà del Cinquecento," in Vincenzo De Caprio and Concetta Ranieri (eds.), *Presenze eterodosse nel viterbese tra Quattro e Cinquecento: Atti del convegno internazionale, Viterbo, 2–3 dicembre 1996* (Rome, 2000), pp. 105–121.

<sup>4</sup> See the sources reviewed below, pp. 15–20.

<sup>5</sup> Cf., e.g., Quentin Skinner, "Meaning and Understanding in the History of Ideas," *History and Theory*, 8 (1969), pp. 3–53, at 28–30.

and a professional movement of *novi homines* attached to the disciplines that comprised the *studia humanitatis*.<sup>6</sup> Most of these views are indebted at least as much to modern concerns as they are to contemporary sources. On the other hand, under the spell of Paul Oskar Kristeller's powerful and influential – and ostensibly non-ideological – interpretation, humanism has gradually lost any convincing *raison d'être* beyond the universal motivations of careerism and financial gain. The upshot is a Lilliputian view in which the comprehensibility of humanism decreases the more closely the magnifying glass is applied to its features; and much as happened to Gulliver when perched upon a Brobdingnagian bosom, microscopic familiarity has bred contempt.<sup>7</sup>

Paying attention to what humanists thought was important about what they were doing can correct our perspective in two indispensable ways. First, it pushes essential characteristics of humanism to the fore, that is, those traits and activities that humanists themselves discerned as central to their identity, those by which they recognized each other and which served to distinguish them as humanists in the eyes of others.<sup>8</sup> Second, it connects those characteristics to cultural aspirations and ideals that make humanism comprehensible as a widespread movement, a movement, furthermore, in which many individuals took pride in taking part or with which they expressly sought to identify themselves. The first insight will help us to understand better what humanism was, the second for what purpose it existed. And with this information we can then retrieve not only the magnificent sense of importance humanists enjoyed about themselves, but also the gigantic significance humanism had in its own day

<sup>6</sup> Syntheses of past interpretations of humanism and scholarly currents can be found in: Angelo Maz-zocco (ed.), *Interpretations of Renaissance Humanism* (Leiden, 2006); Riccardo Fubini, *L'umanesimo italiano e i suoi storici: origini rinascimentali – critica moderna* (Milan, 2001), esp. Part III: “L'Umanesimo e il Rinascimento nella storiografia moderna” (pp. 209–336); William Caferro, *Contesting the Renaissance* (Malden, Mass., 2011), ch. 4: “Humanism: Renovation or Innovation? Transmission or Reception?” (pp. 98–125); Paul F. Grendler, “The Italian Renaissance in the Past Seventy Years: Humanism, Social History, and Early Modern in Anglo-American and Italian Scholarship,” in Allen J. Grieco, Michael Rocke, and Fiorella Giffredi Superbi (eds.), *The Italian Renaissance in the Twentieth Century. Acts of an International Conference, Florence, Villa I Tatti, June 9–11, 1999* (Florence, 2002), pp. 3–23; and, for scholarship since the year 2000, Mark Jurđević, “Hedgehogs and Foxes: The Present and Future of Italian Renaissance Intellectual History,” *Past and Present*, 195:1 (2007), pp. 241–268.

<sup>7</sup> See Kenneth Gouwens, “Perceiving the Past: Renaissance Humanism after the ‘Cognitive Turn,’” *The American Historical Review*, 103 (1998), pp. 55–82, at 57: “an entire generation of social historians has practically written humanism out of its narrative of the Renaissance.” Cf. Eckhard Kessler, “Renaissance Humanism: The Rhetorical Turn,” in Mazzocco (ed.), *Interpretations of Renaissance Humanism*, pp. 181–197, at 181–183.

<sup>8</sup> Cf. Christopher S. Celenza, *The Lost Italian Renaissance: Humanists, Historians, and Latin's Legacy* (Baltimore, 2004), p. 119.

and in subsequent history. If Quattrocento humanists were first and foremost rhetoricians, if they were determined to revive classical Latin in their time, if they cherished the beauty of eloquence – petty concerns from the modern standpoint, esoteric if not elitist and thus considered of little importance for broad cultural trends – we must wonder why the humanist program captivated contemporaries and generations, indeed centuries, to come and managed enduringly to transform European culture. As this study argues, it is because language was insolubly linked for humanists with broader cultural conditions and ideals, and in a way that is inverse to our understanding of the mechanisms of civilization. Whereas we tend to view cultural excellence as the product of social stability, economic prosperity, political power, and military might, the humanists believed it to be the premise to these latter conditions. The remedy for Italy's social, political, and military ills, they reasoned, was cultural refinement. And there was no greater refinement than linguistic refinement. As they saw it, reviving the glory of ancient Latin language and literature was the path to reviving the strength, the excellence, the greatness of Roman antiquity. From this perspective, humanism emerges as an elixir, a strategy for renewing civilization via the literature that stood as the greatest testament to the possibility of civilization itself.

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The sources for humanist self-conception have barely been tapped for their invaluable evidence, and they have been largely ignored in recent work.<sup>9</sup> They received the most sustained attention in the nineteenth century. Georg Voigt drew substantially from the humanists' claims about their own movement, especially as found in letters and literary dedications, in his magnum opus, whose title plainly states his understanding of humanism:

<sup>9</sup> A related question, that of the humanist conception of the Renaissance, received a great deal of attention in the 1930s and 1940s, and some of those studies inevitably drew on a smattering of the sources alluded to above. See, e.g., Wallace K. Ferguson, *The Renaissance in Historical Thought: Five Centuries of Interpretation* (Boston, 1948), esp. ch. 1: "The Early Humanist Tradition in Italy," who provides ample bibliography of previous studies in nn. 2 and 3 on p. 2; Franco Simone, "La coscienza della Rinascita negli umanisti," *La Rinascita*, 2 (1939), pp. 838–871 and 3 (1940), pp. 163–186; Herbert Weisinger, "Who Began the Revival of Learning? The Renaissance Point of View," *Papers of the Michigan Academy of Science, Arts and Letters*, 30 (1945), pp. 625–638; Weisinger, "Renaissance Theories of the Revival of the Fine Arts," *Italica*, 20:4 (1943), pp. 163–170; and Weisinger, "The Self-Awareness of the Renaissance as a Criterion of the Renaissance," *Papers of the Michigan Academy of Science, Arts and Letters*, 29 (1944), pp. 561–567. These studies, especially those of Ferguson and Weisinger, as well as the earlier approach of Konrad Burdach (see Ferguson, *The Renaissance in Historical Thought*, p. 2, n. 3), would later be criticized in Eugenio Garin, *Rinascite e rivoluzioni: Movimenti culturali dal XIV al XVIII secolo*, new ed. (Rome, 2007), ch. 1: "Età buie e rinascita: un problema di confini."

*Die Wiederbelebung des classischen Alterthums, oder, Das erste Jahrhundert des Humanismus* (*The Revival of Classical Antiquity, or The First Century of Humanism*, 1859/1893).<sup>10</sup> Attention to humanists' explicit claims is also manifest in the canonical interpretation of humanism bequeathed from the nineteenth century, Jacob Burckhardt's *Civilization of the Renaissance in Italy* (1860).<sup>11</sup> Burckhardt was heavily influenced by the biography of the humanist Leon Battista Alberti, subsequently considered by scholars a deceptive autobiography, which celebrated the perfection of the ideal individual. Although only one of many sources and pieces of evidence that underlie *Civilization*, it was instrumental for Burckhardt's conception of humanism as a distinctly modern culture of individualistic liberation from the intellectual and spiritual straitjacket of the Middle Ages.<sup>12</sup>

Historiographical currents in the twentieth century took decidedly less interest in humanist accounts of humanism. These played no perceptible role in the major challenges to Burckhardt's vision, which came in the 1950s first at the hands of two German scholars, both émigrés who found their permanent homes in American academic institutions: Hans Baron and Paul Oskar Kristeller. Baron formulated his theory of civic humanism by focusing his attention on Florence at the turn of the fifteenth century, which at that time found itself menaced by the expansion of Milanese tyranny.<sup>13</sup> Baron's close reading of polemics and other texts of that period convinced him that the renascent passion ignited by Petrarch for classical literature

<sup>10</sup> Georg Voigt, *Die Wiederbelebung des classischen Alterthums, oder, Das erste Jahrhundert des Humanismus*, 3rd ed. (Berlin, 1893). Although first published in 1859, the third edition of 1893 is the definitive version in German; there is also an important Italian translation with an introduction by Eugenio Garin and many additions to the notes: *Il Risorgimento dell'antichità classica, ovvero il primo secolo d'Umanesimo*, tr. D. Valbusa, facsimile reprint ed. Eugenio Garin (Florence, 1968). On the much neglected Voigt see Paul F. Grendler, "Georg Voigt: Historian of Humanism," in Christopher S. Celenza and Kenneth Gouwens (eds.), *Humanism and Creativity in the Renaissance: Essays in Honor of Ronald G. Witt* (Leiden, 2006), pp. 295–325.

<sup>11</sup> First published Jacob Burckhardt, *Die Cultur der Renaissance in Italien: Ein Versuch* (Basel, 1860). A standard English translation is *The Civilization of the Renaissance in Italy*, tr. S.G.C. Middlemore (New York, 2002). For a resume of Burckhardt's view of humanism and of the major scholarly reactions to it, see Robert Black, "Humanism," in *The New Cambridge Medieval History*, vol. VII: c. 1415–c. 1500, ed. C.T. Allmand (Cambridge, 1998), pp. 243–277, at 243–252.

<sup>12</sup> Anthony Grafton, *Leon Battista Alberti: Master Builder of the Italian Renaissance* (Cambridge, Mass., 2002), pp. 14–18. Grafton also notes that Burckhardt drew his inspiration for *Civilization* from Vespasiano da Bisticci's *Vite*, and that he carefully studied Vasari's *Vite* and Giovio's *Elogia* in his "search for the ideal type of the Renaissance man" (p. 17). Important considerations on Burckhardt's use of the Alberti (auto)biography are also found in Karl A.E. Enenkel, *Die Erfindung des Menschen. Die Autobiographik des frühneuzeitlichen Humanismus von Petrarca bis Lipsius* (Berlin, 2008), pp. 189–228; Enenkel argues that the Alberti *vita* is not an autobiography but rather a biography by Lapo da Castiglionchio the Younger.

<sup>13</sup> Hans Baron, *The Crisis of the Early Italian Renaissance: Civic Humanism and Republican Liberty in an Age of Classicism and Tyranny* (Princeton, 1955).

and eloquent Latin had become fused with the intellectual defense of the republican commune against the growing trend towards signory in Italy. Although long influential, Baron's idealistic view has now been reduced to a more grounded interpretation both of Renaissance republicanism and of humanism's relationship to it;<sup>14</sup> nonetheless the concept of *umanesimo civile* still holds sway in Italian scholarship.<sup>15</sup> Kristeller, on the other hand, based his interpretation not so much on a thorough reading of a selection of texts as on his magisterial view of the whole corpus of humanist literature. He concluded that Italian humanism was a rhetorical and literary movement, steeped in the (especially Latin) classical tradition, that took shape in a professional class of notaries, teachers, secretaries, and diplomats. In his view, humanism lacked any coherent civic ideology, was generally devoid of sophisticated philosophical content, and was basically equivalent to the *studia humanitatis*, the cycle of disciplines comprised of grammar, rhetoric, poetry, history, and moral philosophy.<sup>16</sup> Contemporaneously with

<sup>14</sup> James Hankins, "The 'Baron Thesis' after Forty Years and Some Recent Studies of Leonardo Bruni," *Journal of the History of Ideas*, 56:2 (1995), pp. 309–338; Hankins (ed.), *Renaissance Civic Humanism: Reappraisals and Reflections* (Cambridge, 2000); Kay Schiller, *Gelehrte Gegenwelten: Über humanistische Leitbilder im 20. Jahrhundert* (Frankfurt, 2000) [an earlier English version is "Hans Baron's Humanism," *Storia della storiografia*, 34 (1998), pp. 51–99]; the *AHR Forum* devoted to Baron in *The American Historical Review*, 101:1 (1996), pp. 107–144 (contributions by Ronald G. Witt, "Introduction: Hans Baron's Humanism," pp. 107–109; Witt, "The Crisis after Forty Years," pp. 110–118; John M. Najemy, "Baron's Machiavelli and Renaissance Republicanism," pp. 119–129; Craig Kallendorf, "The Historical Petrarch," pp. 130–141; and Werner Gundersheimer, "Hans Baron's Renaissance Humanism: A Comment," pp. 142–144); Riccardo Fubini, "Renaissance Historian: The Career of Hans Baron," *Journal of Modern History*, 64:3 (1992), pp. 541–574, esp. 569–574; Albert Rabil, Jr., "The Significance of 'Civic Humanism' in the Interpretation of the Italian Renaissance," in Rabil (ed.), *Renaissance Humanism: Foundations, Forms, and Legacy*, 3 vols. (Philadelphia, 1988), vol. I, pp. 141–174. For the outright rejection of Baron's thesis, see Robert Black's review of Hankins (ed.), *Renaissance Civic Humanism*, in *The English Historical Review*, 116:467 (2001), pp. 715–716.

<sup>15</sup> Especially through the writings of Eugenio Garin. See, e.g., his *L'umanesimo italiano: filosofia e vita civile nel Rinascimento* (Rome, 1952/1993) [originally published as *Der italienische Humanismus* (Bern, 1947)], esp. ch. 2: "La vita civile," pp. 47–93. In his "Nota bibliografica," Garin writes, "Fra le opere d'insieme, che hanno riprospettato con originalità indagini e di materiali i problemi di cui si tocca in questo libro, sono da porsi in primo luogo le opere di H. Baron" (p. 257). And in his "Avvertenza all'edizione 1994," Garin writes, "Può darsi che talora certe ipotesi ci prendessero la mano. Ma c'era non poco di vero in molte tesi sull'umanesimo civile che fra gli anni Trenta a Quaranta cominciarono ad affacciarsi, e non solo nei primi saggi di Hans Baron e miei, ma in testi di Chabod e di Nino Valeri" (p. xvii), adding in a related note, "Lo stesso Baron ebbe a ricordare come già nel '41 io sottolineassi l'interesse delle sue idee e come certe nostre linee di ricerca si fossero incontrate molto presto" (n. 10).

<sup>16</sup> A good synthesis of Kristeller's view can be found in his *Renaissance Thought and its Sources*, ed. Michael Mooney (New York, 1979). It is also represented richly and manifoldly in his collection *Studies in Renaissance Thought and Letters*, 4 vols. (Rome, 1956–1996). On Kristeller's view of humanism, see John Monfasani, "Toward the Genesis of the Kristeller Thesis of Renaissance Humanism: Four Bibliographical Notes," *Renaissance Quarterly*, 53:4 (2000), pp. 1156–1173; see also



Kristeller, the Italian scholar Eugenio Garin developed a contrary view of humanism, one very much descended from Burckhardt.<sup>17</sup> The two parted ways at their respective conceptions of philosophy, which Kristeller understood as a rigorous, systematic investigation of truth within a restricted range of topics. Garin, on the other hand, had a broader understanding of what constituted philosophy. He concentrated his work especially on the close reading of literary texts, drawing out of them their authors' philosophies of life and general worldviews.<sup>18</sup> Thus he considered humanism to be a fundamentally philosophical movement, and one generative of important new conceptions of man, of religion, and of social relations – a movement of thought with certain common themes, analogous to the Enlightenment. Garin also identified humanism with the general intellectual culture of the Renaissance period as a whole, tending to broaden the concept precisely where Kristeller narrowed it.<sup>19</sup>

the recent publication of essays on Kristeller and the influence of his thought, John Monfasani (ed.), *Kristeller Reconsidered: Essays on his Life and Scholarship* (New York, 2006).

<sup>17</sup> Garin articulated his position many times in diverse studies. Representative texts are his *L'umanesimo italiano and Medioevo e rinascimento: studi e ricerche* (Rome, 1954/2005). On Garin, see Michele Ciliberto, *Eugenio Garin. Un intellettuale nel Novecento* (Rome, 2011); Ciliberto, "Una meditazione sulla condizione umana. Eugenio Garin interprete del Rinascimento," *Rivista di storia della filosofia*, 63:4 (2008), pp. 653–692; Olivia Catanorchi and Valentina Lepri (eds.), *Eugenio Garin. Dal Rinascimento all'Illuminismo, Atti del convegno, Firenze, 6–8 marzo 2009* (Rome, 2011); Claudio Cesa, "Momenti della formazione di uno storico della filosofia (1929–1947)," in Felicità Audisio and Alessandro Savorelli (eds.), *Eugenio Garin. Il percorso storiografico di un maestro del Novecento* (Florence, 2003), pp. 15–34; Massimiliano Capati, *Cantimori, Contini, Garin: crisi di una cultura idealistica* (Bologna, 1997); Franco Cambi (ed.), *Tra scienza e storia: percorsi del neostoricismo italiano: Eugenio Garin, Paolo Rossi, Sergio Moravio* (Milan, 1992); Black, "Humanism," pp. 245–246.

<sup>18</sup> Garin explained the difference between the two over philosophy in the autobiographical essay attached to the new edition of his *La filosofia come sapere storico: con un saggio autobiografico* (Rome, 1990), pp. 146–147; this public statement substantially reproduces what he says in a personal letter to Kristeller of September 25, 1953 (see James Hankins, "Garin and Paul Oskar Kristeller," cited below, who demonstrates the connection between the two writings). See also Celenza, *The Lost Italian Renaissance*, ch. 2: "Italian Renaissance Humanism in the Twentieth Century: Eugenio Garin and Paul Oskar Kristeller," pp. 16–57; James Hankins, "Garin and Paul Oskar Kristeller: Existentialism, Neo-Kantianism, and the Post-War Interpretation of Renaissance Humanism," in Catanorchi and Lepri (eds.), *Eugenio Garin. Dal Rinascimento all'Illuminismo*, pp. 481–505; Hankins, "Renaissance Philosophy between God and the Devil," in Hankins, *Humanism and Platonism*, vol. I, pp. 591–615, at 604–615 [originally published in *The Italian Renaissance in the Twentieth Century. Proceedings of a conference held at the Villa I Tatti, June 9–11, 1999* (Florence, 2002), pp. 265–289]; and Hankins, "Two Twentieth-Century Interpreters of Renaissance Humanism: Eugenio Garin and Paul Oskar Kristeller," in Hankins, *Humanism and Platonism*, vol. I, pp. 573–590 [originally published in *Comparative Criticism*, 23 (2001), pp. 3–19].

<sup>19</sup> An example is his *Rinascite e rivoluzioni*, ch. 1: "Età buie e rinascita: un problema di confini," where the thought of fifteenth-century humanists like Bruni and Valla is joined with the revolutionary stance of Cola di Rienzo, on the one hand, and early Enlightenment figures, on the other. Kristeller articulated this major difference between his approach and Garin's in a letter to Garin dated September 21, 1953 (Pisa, Scuola Normale Superiore, Fondo Garin): "Quando concludi dalla mia asserzione che gli umanisti italiani non furono filosofi (e penso al Poggio, al Guarino, a Pio II, al



The result has tended to be a broad and unsatisfying split between Italian and Anglo-American scholarship.<sup>20</sup> The former, following Garin and concentrating on what seem to be representative writings, such as histories, educational treatises, or works of political or moral philosophy, conceives of humanism as an essentially ideological phenomenon growing out of a reaction against medieval culture.<sup>21</sup> The latter, taking its cue from Kristeller, emphasizes continuity with the Middle Ages and has tried to penetrate to the deeper meaning of humanism by way of the activities and especially the professional interests of its participants.<sup>22</sup> This interpretive bifurcation is especially evident in related fields of Renaissance scholarship, such as political, economic, social, or art history, where the focus is not on humanism itself but in which some understanding of humanism is nevertheless deemed necessary for the topic under discussion. In such cases, Italian scholars are generally content to rely on Garin, Anglophones to fall back on Kristeller. And no wonder, as both their interpretations are eminently useful, broadly inclusive, and pliable enough to admit of all kinds of research within their explanatory boundaries.

And yet, despite their clear advantages over the paradigms of Burckhardt and Baron, neither of these interpretations can claim to be definitive. The strength of Garin's understanding is that it places humanism within an intelligible intellectual and cultural context in European history; its weakness is that it has great difficulty identifying the various aspects that make up a humanist profile. It is strong on *why*, weak on *what*. The opposite is the case for Kristeller, who developed his view largely in reaction to other schools of thought he saw as too preoccupied with the coming of modernity

Filelfo ecc., ma non al Ficino o al Pico) che io rifiuto qualsiasi significato filosofico al Rinascimento, non fai altro che identificare umanesimo e rinascimento, cioè mi attribuisce quell'uso di parole che tu veramente segui nel tuo volume sull'umanesimo."

<sup>20</sup> Although certain currents of scholarship are attempting to bridge the divide. See, e.g., James Hankins, "Machiavelli, Civic Humanism, and the Humanist Politics of Virtue," *Italian Culture*, 32:2 (2014), pp. 98–109; Hankins, "Exclusivist Republicanism and the Non-Monarchical Republic," *Political Theory*, 38 (2010), pp. 452–482; Christopher S. Celenza, "The Platonic Revival," in James Hankins (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to Renaissance Philosophy* (Cambridge, 2007), pp. 72–96; Celenza, "Lorenzo Valla and the Traditions and Transmissions of Philosophy," *Journal of the History of Ideas*, 66 (2005), pp. 483–506; Celenza, "Petrarch, Latin, and Italian Renaissance Latinity," *Journal of Medieval and Early Modern Studies*, 35 (2005), pp. 509–536. The present study is also undertaken in this conciliatory spirit.

<sup>21</sup> An important recent example is Luca D'Ascia, "Coscienza della Rinascita e coscienza antibarbara. Appunti sulla visione storica del Rinascimento nei secoli XV e XVI," in Renzo Raghianti and Alessandro Savorelli (eds.), *Rinascimento mito e concetto* (Pisa, 2005), pp. 1–37.

<sup>22</sup> Evidence of Kristeller's ascendancy is the canonization of his view in the *New Cambridge Medieval History*: Black, "Humanism," as well as in the three-volume synthesis of humanism edited by Albert Rabil, Jr., *Renaissance Humanism: Foundations, Forms, and Legacy* (Philadelphia, 1988).

and with reigning ideological controversies – Burckhardt with liberalism, Baron with republicanism and the civic applicability of *Bildung*, and Garin with modern science, the Enlightenment, and the Gramscian notion of organic philosophers – rather than with the phenomenon itself.<sup>23</sup> To be sure, Kristeller's view of humanism was also shaped by ideological battles of the twentieth century.<sup>24</sup> But where others (like Baron and Garin) cleaved to one side or another, Kristeller tried to purge humanism of all ideological overtones according to the model of scientific research (*Wissenschaft*).<sup>25</sup> Wanting to describe humanism in the least tendentious and most value-free way possible, he reduced it to the barest facts he could. The result is an interpretation surely sound in its component parts but that lacks a convincing rationale. Kristeller can reliably tell us about many of humanism's salient characteristics, but he cannot tell us about one of the most, if not *the* most, important: for what purpose did humanism come about, i.e., what did humanists strive for?<sup>26</sup> What sense does a professional movement guided by the revived *studia humanitatis* make in the larger context of European history? Why did anyone want to be a humanist, especially in its earlier stages when it held no widespread social or economic advantage? At stake is the *telos*, the final cause, of humanism.<sup>27</sup>

An attempt has been made to answer this question by focusing on humanists in their role as educators.<sup>28</sup> Heavily influenced by his reading of humanist educational treatises, Paul Grendler described humanism as an educational ethos dedicated to instilling virtue in students by way of reading the great literary works of the ancients.<sup>29</sup> Grendler was responding in part

<sup>23</sup> On Burckhardt, see Lionel Gossman, *Basel in the Age of Burckhardt: A Study in Unseasonable Ideas* (Chicago, 2000), Part III: "Jacob Burckhardt," pp. 201–346; on Baron, see Fubini, "Renaissance Historian"; Schiller, *Gelehrte Gegenwelten*; and Schiller, "Made 'fit for America': The Renaissance Historian Hans Baron in London Exile 1936–38," in Stefan Berger, Peter Lambert, and Peter Schumann (eds.), *Historikerdialoge. Geschichte, Mythos und Gedächtnis im deutsch-britischen kulturellen Austausch 1750–2000* (Göttingen, 2003), pp. 345–359; on Garin, see Ciliberto, "Una meditazione"; Cesa, "Momenti della formazione"; and Hankins, "Garin and Paul Oskar Kristeller."

<sup>24</sup> See Hankins, "Two Twentieth-Century Interpreters," esp. pp. 581–586.

<sup>25</sup> See Hankins, "Renaissance Philosophy between God and the Devil," pp. 611–612.

<sup>26</sup> Kristeller's evident lack of interest in the causes of humanism has been pointed out by Ronald G. Witt, *In the Footsteps of the Ancients: The Origins of Humanism from Lovato to Bruni* (Leiden, 2000), pp. 3–4.

<sup>27</sup> This issue has been insightfully addressed, though not from within the Kristellerian paradigm, by Francisco Rico, *El sueño del humanismo: (De Petrarca a Erasmo)* (Madrid, 1993); and D'Ascia, "Coscienza della Rinascita."

<sup>28</sup> The classic study of humanist education, to which all subsequent scholarship has added or responded, is Eugenio Garin, *L'educazione in Europa (1400–1600). Problemi e programmi* (Bari, 1957).

<sup>29</sup> Paul F. Grendler, *Schooling in Renaissance Italy: Literacy and Learning, 1300–1600* (Baltimore, 1989). On humanist educational ideals, see *Humanist Educational Treatises*, ed. and tr. Craig Kallendorf

to Anthony Grafton and Lisa Jardine, who in a grand polemic against the usefulness of the modern humanities had impugned their roots in Renaissance humanism.<sup>30</sup> Through their examination of texts by marginalized groups such as women, they had deconstructed the humanists' education in virtue and depicted it instead as the self-serving advertisement of a new professional class. In their view, humanist rhetoric about virtue and love of classical literature was little more than hot air aimed at inflating their standing and lifting them into the university posts hitherto held by scholastic theologians. Grendler's work might have seemed a substantial counter-argument, but his attempt at salvaging an ethos for the humanists suffered shortly thereafter from a forceful rebuttal by Robert Black.<sup>31</sup> Black undermined Grendler's position by comparing the claims of the humanist educational treatises to actual classroom practice, such as he was able to reconstruct it from documentary sources, and by revealing a widespread misunderstanding about the supposed similarity between the subjects proper to grammar-school and university-level education. From his research into grammar education in Tuscany, Black concludes that virtue played no part in the humanist classroom.

Another noteworthy attempt has been made to endow humanism with an intelligible rationale, this one disavowing the explanatory power Kristeller attributed to the professional context. In an important article Hanna Gray distilled the essence of humanism down to what she called the "pursuit of eloquence."<sup>32</sup> Taking issue with Kristeller, she wrote:

To say that the humanists merely introduced a more classical tone into a fixed series of activities does not indicate why it appeared so essential to them to return to the classical models of the *studia humanitatis*, or why they failed to recognize, indeed disclaimed, continuity with medieval practice. To suggest that their attitudes are explicable in terms of their professional

(Cambridge, Mass., 2002), with Kallendorf's introduction. Cf. Paul F. Gehl, *A Moral Art: Grammar, Society, and Culture in Trecento Florence* (Ithaca, 1993).

<sup>30</sup> Anthony Grafton and Lisa Jardine, *From Humanism to the Humanities: Education and the Liberal Arts in Fifteenth- and Sixteenth-Century Europe* (Cambridge, Mass., 1986).

<sup>31</sup> The debate began in *Journal of the History of Ideas*: Robert Black, "Italian Renaissance Education: Changing Perspectives and Continuing Controversies," 52:2 (1991), pp. 315–334; Paul F. Grendler, "Reply to Robert Black," 52:2 (1991), pp. 335–337; Robert Black, "Reply to Paul Grendler," 52:3 (1991), pp. 519–520. Black has since written two monographs on the topic: *Humanism and Education in Medieval and Renaissance Italy: Tradition and Innovation in Latin Schools from the Twelfth to the Fifteenth Century* (Cambridge, 2001); and *Education and Society in Florentine Tuscany: Teachers, Pupils and Schools, c. 1250 to 1500* (Leiden, 2007). For a recapitulation of Black's view, see Black, "Humanism," pp. 258–262.

<sup>32</sup> Hanna H. Gray, "Renaissance Humanism: The Pursuit of Eloquence," *Journal of the History of Ideas*, 24 (1963), pp. 497–514.

concerns, which are naturally in competition with those of other professions, does not explain how they articulated those concerns, how and why in a particular age men should have turned to rhetoric and claimed for it a special educational and cultural role.<sup>33</sup>

Her view was that the eloquence at the root of the *studia humanitatis* – eloquence understood, that is, as the “harmonious union of wisdom and style” – provided humanists with an antidote to the impotence they perceived in scholasticism and a viable model for pursuing their own, different kind of philosophy.<sup>34</sup> More recently, Ronald G. Witt has concurred with Gray’s critique, minimizing the importance of the professional context and arguing that humanists were essentially driven by a stylistic ideal: the imitation of the ancient Latin authors.<sup>35</sup> According to his *In the Footsteps of the Ancients*, humanism began as the preoccupation of a few individuals with the imitation of classical Latin poetry, which imitation eventually spread to prose and then was harnessed by Petrarch to a broader cultural program of Christian piety and moral renewal. Through subsequent changes in the persons of Coluccio Salutati and Leonardo Bruni, humanism became institutionalized in chanceries and communal governments and eventually lost its Christian emphasis, although it still represented a valid alternative to the cultural standards inherited from the Middle Ages.

The vast differences between these schools of thought suggest that the definition of humanism is today as open a question as it was when first taken up by modern historiography one and a half centuries ago. What is more, the claims to validity, or at least to thoroughness and universality, of the prevailing interpretations of humanism have recently been challenged by a provocative appeal in the form of Christopher S. Celenza’s essay, *The Lost Italian Renaissance*.<sup>36</sup> This work argues that our knowledge of humanism is fatally limited by the field’s general ignorance of the sources, and specifically of humanist literary texts, which for the most part lie

<sup>33</sup> Ibid., p. 500.      <sup>34</sup> Ibid., p. 498.

<sup>35</sup> Witt, *Footsteps*. Witt enunciated the broad contours of this view earlier in his essay “Medieval Italian Culture and the Origins of Humanism as a Stylistic Ideal,” in Rabil (ed.), *Renaissance Humanism*, vol. I, pp. 29–70; and he refined it further in “Kristeller’s Humanists as Heirs of the Medieval Dictatores,” in Mazzocco (ed.), *Interpretations of Renaissance Humanism*, pp. 21–35. Cf. also Kefler, “Renaissance Humanism: The Rhetorical Turn.” For Witt’s view on the deep origins of humanism, see *The Two Latin Cultures and the Foundation of Renaissance Humanism in Medieval Italy* (Cambridge, 2011).

<sup>36</sup> Celenza, *The Lost Italian Renaissance*. The validity and timeliness of Celenza’s argument have achieved wide recognition among Renaissance scholars. See the reviews of Michael J.B. Allen in *Renaissance Quarterly*, 58:2 (2005), pp. 576–577; Jurdjevic, “Hedgehogs and Foxes,” esp. pp. 265–266; and Maurizio Campanelli, published electronically on H-Italy, H-Net Reviews, February 2006 (<http://www.net.org/reviews/showrev.php?id=11391>).

unread in the dust of manuscript repositories and pre-modern editions. In view of the unresolved (and perhaps unresolvable) historiographical dispute between the Kristeller and Garin camps, the reigning uncertainty about humanism's cultural importance, and now of Celenza's critique, the understanding of Italian Renaissance humanism clearly needs an overhaul. Celenza emphasizes that such a reconsideration should not be limited to well-known evidence but should rather prefer the examination of hitherto neglected sources. Within such a framework, which one cannot but agree is highly desirable, a more historicizing and text-driven approach to defining Renaissance humanism must surely put a high priority on bringing to light the great many humanist testimonies specifically of humanism.

The very little work done in this area indicates how fruitful such research can be. In the past fifty-five years two studies have been specifically devoted to the self-conception of the humanists. In 1960, Charles Trinkaus published an article on Bartolomeo della Fonte's inaugural orations at the University of Florence in the 1480s, intending it as a mild corrective to Kristeller's view of humanists as a professional class with little in the way of an ethos and nothing of a philosophy.<sup>37</sup> Trinkaus argues that, for della Fonte, humanism, being composed of the five disciplines of the *studia humanitatis* (grammar, rhetoric, history, poetry, moral philosophy) but with a special emphasis on rhetoric, was a particularly humanizing pursuit – i.e., that it was of all pursuits the one most apt to make man more human. Furthermore, it was highly useful in private and civic life, nor was it in any way contrary to religion. Finally, humanism was definitely distinct from philosophy, and the humanist, or rhetorician, not the philosopher, was the highest human type. The orations also iterated several times a history of rhetoric, charting its rise in ancient Greece and Rome, its decline in the wake of the barbarian invasions of the fifth century, and its subsequent reawakening with Petrarch. Based on what he judged to be della Fonte's manifest unoriginality in every area except textual scholarship, Trinkaus concluded that the view of humanism found in the inaugural orations represented not only della Fonte's own opinion but also that of his cultural milieu, and thus that it could be attributed generally to the scholars, the students, and the patrons of humanism in Florence in the last quarter of the fifteenth century. The other scholarly consideration of the self-conception

<sup>37</sup> Charles Edward Trinkaus, "A Humanist's Conception of Humanism: The Inaugural Orations of Bartolomeo della Fonte," *Studies in the Renaissance*, 7 (1960), pp. 90–147, at 90–91 and 123–125 for his work's relationship to Kristeller's view of humanism [reprinted in Trinkhaus, *The Scope of Renaissance Humanism* (Ann Arbor, 1983), pp. 52–87, but without the appendices and bibliographies of della Fonte].

of the humanists is contained in John M. McManamon's *Funeral Oratory and the Cultural Ideals of Italian Humanism*.<sup>38</sup> From his broad consideration of humanist funeral orations throughout the entire fifteenth century and all over Italy, McManamon arrives at very different conclusions about humanism from Trinkaus's. First, the true founder of humanism was not Petrarch but rather the team of Manuel Chrysoloras and Leonardo Bruni. Second, the great accomplishment of humanism was to have resurrected the ancient tradition of *bonae litterae* and the *artes liberales*. There is no talk of making man more human, although humanist education is praised as leading students to virtue.

As Trinkaus's and McManamon's studies indicate, further investigations into humanist accounts of humanism can shed much light on the humanists' sense of their own contribution to the culture of their age, of their relationship to formal philosophy and other disciplines like law and medicine, of their history, founders, and exemplary exponents, of their cultural ideals, of their view of the past, of their hopes for the future, and so on. Yet their example is also indicative of the difficulties inherent in using such sources. For one they can reveal as much contradiction as concord, resulting from a difference not only of authors but more importantly of genre, context, and audience. Although both Trinkaus and McManamon considered ceremonial orations, the former interpreted academic orations intended to defend humanism's value against other disciplines and to encourage a learned and especially a humanist audience (or at least one sympathetic to humanism) in its studies in Florence,<sup>39</sup> whereas the latter considered funeral orations intended to console and to honor the values of a civic, non-humanist audience all over Italy. Another, graver problem with such sources is their radical subjectivity. Consider the passages from Bruni's *Memoirs* quoted at the outset. No matter how intimately revealing the text may seem about his decision to learn Greek, his regard for his teacher, and his estimation of his fellow students, Bruni's is still only one lone, albeit authoritative, voice. Taken by itself, it floats tantalizingly in the void. In order for it to do more than enunciate an idiosyncratic view, it must be considered together with similar texts, all of which must ultimately be compared, weighed, and searched for common patterns – surely an admirable goal but also

<sup>38</sup> John M. McManamon, S.J., *Funeral Oratory and the Cultural Ideals of Italian Humanism* (Chapel Hill, 1989), ch. 6: "Academic Ideals: 'Perfected in the Arts Appropriate to Humanity'" and ch. 7: "Ethos Enshrined."

<sup>39</sup> As Trinkaus notes, the University of Florence was by this time completely dedicated to humanistic subjects, whereas other faculties like law had been relocated to Pisa. See Trinkaus, "A Humanist's Conception," pp. 91–92.

premature, considering the very little work that has been done in this field and the lack even of a detailed overview of the pertinent sources.

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There is a corpus of texts, however, that stands out as being particularly worthy of scrutiny and promising of a broadly representative view: a motley assortment of treatises, biographical collections, and dialogues that provide global accounts of the humanist movement. Apart from the treatises, such works were basically modeled on three ancient bio-historiographical genres popular in the Renaissance: (1) bio-bibliographical registers of works and achievements after the manner of Jerome's *De viris illustribus*; (2) *vita* collections in the tradition of Cornelius Nepos, Plutarch, or Suetonius' *Lives of the Caesars* and *Lives of the Grammarians*; and (3) dialogues modeled on Cicero's *Brutus*. The name of the first of these text types – *De viris illustribus*, or *On Famous Men* – was often eponymously ascribed to all such collective biographical works, and many authors incorporated it, or some modified form of it, into their titles, no matter which specific generic form their work took. Throughout the Middle Ages works of this kind served often, but not exclusively, as vehicles for what we would commonly think of as literary history. Thus Gennadius (ca. 490), Isidore of Seville (ca. 630), and Ildephonsus of Toledo (ca. 660) continued Jerome's work in homonymous writings, whereas Peter the Deacon commemorated members of his monastic community in his *De viris illustribus casinensibus*, Benzo d'Alessandria narrated large spans of history by way of brief biographical entries in his *Chronicon* (ca. 1320), and Boccaccio recorded the exploits of famous women in his *De mulieribus claris* (ca. 1360).<sup>40</sup>

Growing thus out of an ancient (but also a medieval) tradition of celebrating political, religious, and cultural heroes and other great representatives of intellectual and literary traditions, collective biographies in various forms developed in the fifteenth century into a sophisticated

<sup>40</sup> Gennadius, *Liber de viris illustribus*, ed. E.C. Richardson (Leipzig, 1896), pp. 57–97; Isidore of Seville, *El De viris illustribus de Isidoro de Sevilla. Estudio y edición crítica*, ed. C. Codoñer Merino (Salamanca, 1964); Ildephonsus of Toledo, *El De viris illustribus de Ildefonso de Toledo. Estudio y edición crítica*, ed. C. Codoñer Merino (Salamanca, 1972); Peter the Deacon, *De viris illustribus casinensibus*, in *PL*, vol. CLXXIII, pp. 1003–1050, with a supplement by Placidus Romanus (pp. 1049–1062) [a modern Italian translation is Pietro Diacono, *De viris illustribus casinensibus*, tr. and ed. G. Sperduti (Cassino, 1995)]; Benzo d'Alessandria, *Il Chronicon di Benzo d'Alessandria e i classici latini all'inizio del XIV secolo: edizione critica del libro XXIV: "De moribus et vita philosophorum"*, ed. M. Petoletti (Milan, 2000); Giovanni Boccaccio, *On Famous Women*, ed. and tr. Virginia Brown (Cambridge, Mass., 2001).



tool for commemorating the pioneers and premier figures of humanism.<sup>41</sup> Some of the biographies can seem schematic, and some appear to be little more than lists, but even these are replete with useful information. In the course of enumerating the activities and works of a range of humanists, each text offers insight into how its humanist author understood the development, essence, and aspirations of the movement in which he himself was a participant. Not all such works set out to narrate the history of humanism per se – indeed, what they have to say about humanism is seldom inscribed in a formal narrative at all – but they are all nevertheless attempts to take stock of humanism as a whole, to give an account of what it was and what it meant. With careful interpretation and the requisite attention paid to the stories the authors wish to tell, we can reconstruct the narrative that lies beneath the surface and thus approach such sources as humanist histories of humanism.<sup>42</sup>

Among all the sources for humanist self-conception, these biographical collections promise to be the most considered and representative. Discrete biographies and reminiscences in letters, literary dedications, ceremonial orations, and commemorative poetry all abound in useful statements, but these tend to be desultory, incomplete, or panegyrical. Collective

<sup>41</sup> See Guglielmo Bottari, “Introduzione,” in Guglielmo da Pastrengo, *De viris illustribus, et, De originibus*, ed. Guglielmo Bottari (Padua, 1991), pp. ix–xciv; Rudolf Blum, “Die Literaturverzeichnis im Altertum und Mittelalter: Versuch einer Geschichte der Biobibliographie von den Anfängen bis zum Beginn der Neuzeit,” *Archiv für Geschichte des Buchwesens*, 24 (1983), coll. 1–256; Manfred Fuhrmann, “Die Geschichte der Literaturgeschichtsschreibung von den Anfängen bis zum 19. Jahrhundert,” in Bernard Cerquiglini and Hans Ulrich Gumbrecht (eds.), *Der Diskurs der Literatur- und Sprachgeschichte* (Frankfurt am Main, 1983), pp. 49–72; Massimo Miglio, “Biografia e raccolte biografiche nel Quattrocento italiano,” *Atti dell’Accademia delle Scienze dell’Istituto di Bologna* (Classe di Scienze Morali), 63 (1974–1975), pp. 166–199; Rosanna Alhaique Pettinelli, “La critica nell’età umanistica,” in Giorgio Baroni (ed.), *Storia della critica letteraria in Italia* (Turin, 1997), pp. 116–174, at 119–133; Klaus Arnold, “*De viris illustribus*. Aus den Anfängen der humanistischen Literatur-geschichtsschreibung: Johannes Trithemius und andere Schriftstellerkataloge des 15. Jahrhunderts,” *Humanistica Iovaniensis*, 42 (1993), pp. 52–70; and Eric Cochrane, *Historians and Historiography in the Italian Renaissance* (Chicago, 1981), pp. 393–400.

<sup>42</sup> I have discussed the nature of such texts and made arguments for considering them proper works of history in three articles: Patrick Baker, “A Labyrinth of Praise and Blame: On the Form and Structure of Marcantonio Sabellico’s *De latinae linguae reparatione*,” in Johannes Helmrath, Albert Schirmermeister, and Stefan Schlelein (eds.), *Historiographie des Humanismus. Literarische Verfahren, soziale Praxis, geschichtliche Räume* (Berlin, 2013), pp. 209–240; Baker, “Writing History in Cicero’s Shadow,” in Anna Heinze, Albert Schirmermeister, and Julia Weitbrecht (eds.), *Antikes erzählen. Narrative Transformationen von Antike in Mittelalter und Früher Neuzeit* (Berlin, 2013), pp. 75–90; and Baker, “Collective Biography as Historiography: The *De viris illustribus* of Bartolomeo Facio,” in Baker (ed.), *Biography, Historiography, and Modes of Philosophizing: The Tradition of Collective Biography in Early Modern Europe* (forthcoming). See also Massimo Miglio, “Biografia e raccolte biografiche nel Quattrocento italiano,” in P. Tuynman, G. C. Kuiper, and E. Kefler (eds.), *Acta conventus neo-latini amstelodamensis. Proceedings of the Second International Congress of Neo-Latin Studies, Amsterdam, August 19–24, 1973* (Munich, 1979), pp. 775–785.

biographies, on the other hand, are more deliberate, comprehensive, and comparative. This last attribute is of especial importance. Whereas the author of an individual biography or a funeral oration generally erects an oversized monument to his subject, praising him inordinately and attributing to him all manner of accomplishments, the collective biographer must place each individual into a larger cultural landscape. Although the latter's intention is still to praise, he must, like the curator of a museum, take a panoptic view when lining up many *virii illustres* next to one another. When comparison with other figures is easy, obvious, and encouraged, it becomes more difficult for any one person to be praised beyond measure, or at least beyond the measure accorded to all. Finally, in addition to being highly expressive and circumspect, these sources are also likely to be more representative of humanists' sincere self-understanding than those which were generally written for a non-humanist audience and which had the object of defending or selling humanism, such as educational treatises or ceremonial orations. For these accounts of humanism seem to have been written largely for a humanist audience (including patrons who participated meaningfully in humanism), and they contain little of the ideological grandstanding typical of other genres. To adapt Clifford Geertz's famous formulation: these sources are a humanist reading of humanist experience, a story they tell themselves about themselves.<sup>43</sup> It is the object of this book to re-evoke that inner narrative.

Humanists began to write global accounts of their movement in the fourth decade of the fifteenth century, in what appears to have been a moment of intense self-awareness. Tendencies in this direction can be detected in Siculo Polenton's *Scriptorum illustrium latinae linguae libri XVIII* (1437), which charts the development of Latin style across the *auctores* of antiquity but also mentions the few who in modern times achieved the old eloquence.<sup>44</sup> In the next year Lapo da Castiglionchio the Younger published his dialogue *De curiae commodis*, one section of which celebrates the great humanists of the papal curia.<sup>45</sup> Shortly thereafter, in 1441, the Hellenist Cyriac of Ancona dedicated to Pope Eugenius IV his *Itinerarium*, an epistolary treatise describing his (Cyriac's) travels and especially the

<sup>43</sup> Cf. Clifford Geertz, "Deep Play: Notes on the Balinese Cockfight," *Daedalus*, 101:1 (1972), pp. 1–37 [reprinted in Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures: Selected Essays* (New York, 1973)].

<sup>44</sup> Siculo Polenton, *Scriptorum illustrium latinae linguae libri XVIII*, ed. B.L. Ullman (Rome, 1928). The moderns mentioned include: Albertino Mussato, Lovato dei Lovati, Dante, and Petrarch (pp. 126–139), Giovanni Conversini da Ravenna (p. 166), and Francesco Barbaro (pp. 253 and 465) [as noted in M.L. McLaughlin, "Histories of Literature in the Quattrocento," in P. Hainsworth et al. (eds.), *The Languages of Literature in Renaissance Italy* (Oxford, 1988), pp. 63–80, at 68–69].

<sup>45</sup> Celenza, *Renaissance Humanism and the Papal Curia*.

humanists he met along the way, their activities, and, in a typical lapse of modesty, their praises of the author.<sup>46</sup> These sources, however, lack a certain maturity and comprehensiveness. Polenton mentions Italian humanists but gives them very little space in his massive text, Lapo focuses exclusively on humanists employed in the curia, and Cyriac confines himself to humanists of his own acquaintance.

The first to embrace the phenomenon of humanism as a widespread movement, to describe its history, and to give voice specifically to its aspirations or cultural ideals, albeit on a small scale, was the Florentine Giannozzo Manetti. His *Trium illustrium poetarum florentinorum vita* (1440) contains comparative biographies of the Three Crowns of Florence (Dante, Petrarch, and Boccaccio), depicting all three as full-fledged humanists. Especially when read in light of related treatments of Petrarch, Coluccio Salutati, and Niccolò Niccoli in his coeval *De illustribus longaevis* (1439), and of a section dedicated to humanists in his later *Contra Judaeos et Gentes* (1452–1458), these biographies constitute Manetti's attempt not only to defend the humanist credentials of the Three Crowns but also to attribute to them, especially the latter two, the foundation of a broad cultural movement.<sup>47</sup> In the mid- to late 1440s Aeneas Sylvius Piccolomini, then at the episcopal stage of his astonishing Church career, profiled in his *De viris illustribus* the leading men and women of European politics and culture.<sup>48</sup> Only one humanist, Leonardo Bruni, receives an entry, but the article becomes a history of the humanist movement, starting with Bruni as its greatest exponent and then branching out into his teachers, fellows, and successors. Similarly, Biondo Flavio singles out humanism for special treatment in a famous passage of his *Italia illustrata* (1453), a toponymic and cultural gazetteer of Italy.<sup>49</sup> This time the occasion arises not with Bruni but with Giovanni da Ravenna, and the historical method is more rigorous: Biondo goes into greater depth, seeks to explain the causes for the evolution and spread of humanism, and clearly differentiates developmental

<sup>46</sup> Cyriac of Ancona, *Itinerarium*, ed. Lorenzo Mehus (Florentiae: Ex novo Typographio Joannis Pauli Giovannelli ad Insigne Palmae, 1742; facsimile reprint Bologna, 1969). On the dating of the work see Mehus' "Praefatio ad lectorem," pp. xxxiv–xxxvi. According to Mehus (pp. xxxvi–xxxvii): "Multum vero utilitatis ex hoc opusculo percipi potest tum propter praestissimos illius aetatis viros, qui in hoc Itinerario memorantur, tum propter prima illorum studiorum rudimenta, quae nunc ad tantam amplitudinem evecta conspiciuntur."

<sup>47</sup> The relevant sections of Manetti's works are available in Giannozzo Manetti, *Biographical Writings*, ed. and tr. Stefano U. Baldassarri and Rolf Bagemihl (Cambridge, Mass., 2003).

<sup>48</sup> Aeneas Sylvius Piccolomini, *De viris illustribus*, ed. A. Van Heck (Vatican City, 1991).

<sup>49</sup> Biondo Flavio, *Italy Illuminated*, ed. and tr. Jeffrey A. White (Cambridge, Mass., 2005–). Another edition, already complete, is *Biondo Flavio's Italia Illustrata: Text, Translation, and Commentary*, ed. and tr. Catherine J. Castner, 2 vols. (Binghamton, NY, 2005–2010).

stages. Like Piccolomini's treatment, it is only one small chapter in a much larger text with a broader cultural and geographical purview; nevertheless, Biondo portrays humanism as the cornerstone of Italian culture. A similar emphasis is found in the *De viris illustribus* (1456) of Bartolomeo Facio, a lesser-known Ligurian humanist at the court of Alfonso the Magnificent in Naples.<sup>50</sup> It, too, catalogues the achievements of great men across several departments of contemporary life and gives humanists absolute priority. The superior importance of humanism is made even clearer by the organization of the work: the humanists come first, and they greatly outnumber the illustrious figures in law, medicine, the visual arts, war, and politics. Finally, at the end of the 1480s, two texts appear, temporally coincidental though hailing from different regions of Italy, that record the history of humanism in dialogues imitating Cicero's *Brutus*. That is, instead of in a synthetic narrative, the great humanists and their accomplishments are reviewed and judged over the course of informal conversation and speeches. These are the first texts dedicated exclusively to humanism and which consider it without reference to any broader intellectual or cultural context. In Rome, Paolo Cortesi, best known for his polemic with Poliziano over imitation and specifically Ciceronianism in Latin style, charts humanism's development according to the recovery of proper Ciceronian language in his *De hominibus doctis* (ca. 1489).<sup>51</sup> Criticism of style also drives the *De latinae linguae reparatione* (ca. 1489) of Marcantonio Sabellico, an important teacher and historian in Venice who has largely been forgotten by modern scholars.<sup>52</sup> As opposed to Cortesi, however, Sabellico does not use Cicero as his measuring stick, and he offers a different vision of humanism's origins and cultural significance.

Humanist accounts of humanism continue into the sixteenth century, most (in)famously with Erasmus' *Ciceronianus* (1528), yet another imitation of Cicero's *Brutus* and the first writing in the genre to get its author into serious trouble. Erasmus reaped the whirlwind for his unrepentant critique and sometimes downright mockery of too-zealous humanist imitators of Cicero all over Europe but especially in Italy, and he spent the rest of his life soothing egos and ruining the day he had ever published, much less

<sup>50</sup> Bartolomeo Facio, *De viris illustribus liber*, ed. Laurentius Mehus (Florentiae: Ex typ. Joannis Pauli Giovannelli, 1745) [facsimile reprint in Anita Di Stefano et al. (eds.), *La storiografia umanistica. Convegno internazionale di studi, Messina 22–25 ottobre 1987*, 2 vols. in 3 (Messina, 1992), vol. II, pp. 11–164].

<sup>51</sup> Paolo Cortesi, *De hominibus doctis*, ed. Giacomo Ferrau (Palermo, 1979).

<sup>52</sup> Marcantonio Sabellico, *De latinae linguae reparatione*, ed. Guglielmo Bottari (Messina, 1999), hereafter referred to as Sabellico, *DLLR*.

composed, his text.<sup>53</sup> Other important contributions came in the form of Pierio Valeriano's dialogue *De litteratorum infelicitate* (ca. 1529), Paolo Giovio's dialogue *De viris et feminis aetate nostra florentibus* (1527) and biographical collection *Elogia virorum doctorum* (1546), and Lilio Gregorio Giraldi's dialogue *De poetis nostrorum temporum* (1553).<sup>54</sup>

These sources have not been extensively used by historians of humanism, though they have not been entirely neglected, either.<sup>55</sup> Enlightenment scholars like Apostolo Zeno and Lorenzo Mehus relied on them to reconstruct the history of humanism and its literature, and, as mentioned above, they were instrumental for Georg Voigt's *Wiederbelebung des classischen*

<sup>53</sup> See Betty I. Knot, "Introductory Note" to *Ciceronianus*, in Desiderius Erasmus, *The Collected Works of Erasmus*, vol. XXVIII: *Literary and Educational Writings* 6, ed. A.H.T. Levi (Toronto, 1974–2006), pp. 330–334.

<sup>54</sup> These works are available in the following editions: Desiderius Erasmus, *Dialogus ciceronianus*, ed. Pierre Mesnard, in Erasmus, *Opera Omnia*, ordinis primi tomus secundus (Amsterdam, 1971); Pierio Valeriano, *Pierio Valeriano on the Ill Fortune of Learned Men: A Renaissance Humanist and his World*, ed. and tr. Julia Haig Gaisser (Ann Arbor, 1999); Paolo Giovio, *Notable Men and Women of Our Time*, ed. and tr. Kenneth Gouwens (Cambridge, Mass., 2013); Giovio, *Gli elogi degli uomini illustri, letterati, artisti, uomini d'arme*, ed. Renzo Meregazzi (Rome, 1972); Lilio Gregorio Giraldi, *Due dialoghi sui poeti dei nostri tempi*, ed. Claudia Pandolfi (Ferrara, 1999); and Giraldi, *Modern Poets*, ed. and tr. John N. Grant (Cambridge, Mass., 2011).

In addition to the texts listed in these paragraphs, there are many kindred sources that, however, do not pretend to offer global accounts of the humanist movement. Some are too briefly sketched, such as the catalogue of humanists contained in Jacopo Foresti da Bergamo's universal chronicle *Supplementum Chronicarum*, on which see Achim Krümmel, *Das "Supplementum Chronicarum" des Augustinermonches Jacobus Philippus Foresti von Bergamo. Eine der ältesten Bilderchroniken und ihre Wirkungsgeschichte* (Herzberg, 1992). There are also works devoted to only one city instead of all of Italy, e.g., Virgilio Zavarise's poem commemorating the humanists of Verona, in Banterle, "Il carne"; and the poem to Cristoforo Landino's *Comento sopra la Comedia*, ed. Paolo Procaccioli (Rome, 2001), which considers only Florentines (both works date to the second half of the fifteenth century). Another fascinating source is the biographical collection (ca. 1492) of the Florentine bookseller Vespasiano da Bisticci, who, however, was not himself a humanist (although he surely participated in the world of humanism): Vespasiano da Bisticci, *Le Vite*, ed. Aulo Greco, 2 vols. (Florence, 1970–1976). Another source is Benedetto Accolti's *De praestantia virorum sui aevs*. As Robert Black argues, however, it was a rhetorical showpiece meant to impress its dedicatee, Lorenzo de' Medici, by sustaining an insincere and outlandish position, namely the superiority of modern religion, arms, and philosophy over their ancient counterparts. See Robert Black, "Ancients and Moderns in the Renaissance: Rhetoric and History in Accolti's *Dialogue on the Preeminence of Men of his Own Time*," *Journal of the History of Ideas*, 43:1 (1982), pp. 3–32. Black has since somewhat modified his view of the dialogue and the issue of Accolti's sincerity, but its general interpretation is still far from certain. See Black, "Benedetto Accolti: A Portrait," in Celenza and Gouwens (eds.), *Humanism and Creativity*, pp. 61–83, at 74–82; for a different view of the dialogue, see D'Ascia, "Cosienza della Rinascita," pp. 13–15.

<sup>55</sup> Until recently most such texts were not even available in modern editions. From Polenton to Giraldi, only the works of Polenton himself, Giovio, and Erasmus were edited until about thirty years ago. A satisfactory text of Giovio's *Elogia* has still not been issued, though; see the "Nota al testo" of the recent Italian translation: Paolo Giovio, *Elogi degli uomini illustri*, ed. Franco Minonzio, tr. Andrea Guasparri and Franco Minonzio (Turin, 2006), pp. lxxxix–xcviii, at lxxxix–xcii. Even more indicative of the neglect these sources have suffered is the fact that Cyriac's *Itinerarium* and Facio's *De viris illustribus* are still available only in facsimile reprints of unreliable eighteenth-century editions.

*Alterthums*.<sup>56</sup> In the twentieth century, Eugenio Garin used Paolo Cortesi's *De hominibus doctis* to describe the literary ideas of the circle around Pomponio Leto, and Michael Baxandall investigated Bartolomeo Facio's *De viris illustribus* as part of his larger treatment of the humanist criticism of art.<sup>57</sup> Furthermore, Biondo Flavio's *Italia illustrata* has often been cited as an important contemporary witness to the development and significance of the humanist movement in the early Quattrocento.<sup>58</sup> Finally, Erasmus' *Ciceronianus* is a famous text and has received ample attention as part of the cottage industry devoted to its author.<sup>59</sup> Despite such studies, these texts have rarely been considered as a unit with regard to their central purpose – to portray humanism and to illustrate its larger cultural meaning – and they have never been studied systematically to deepen our understanding of humanism, much less of the humanists' own understanding of themselves.<sup>60</sup>

<sup>56</sup> Zeno used Cortesi's *De hominibus doctis* in his *Dissertazioni Vossiane* (Venice, 1752–1753) [mentioned in Maria Teresa Graziosi, "Introduzione," in Paolo Cortesi, *De hominibus doctis dialogus* (Rome, 1973), pp. vii–xxxii, at xxxii] and Sabellico's *De latinae linguae reparatione* in his *Degl'istorici delle cose veneziane, i quali hanno scritto per pubblico decreto* (Venice, 1718–1722) [mentioned in Guglielmo Bottari, "Introduzione," in Sabellico, *DLLR*, pp. 7–67, at 7, 23, 66]. See also de Nichilo, *I viri illustres*, p. 25. Mehus edited Bartolomeo Facio's *De viris illustribus* (Florence, 1745) and Cyriac of Ancona's *Itinerarium* (Florence, 1742), and his conviction of their usefulness for writing a history of humanism (which he never completed) emerges from his respective letters to the reader.

<sup>57</sup> Eugenio Garin, "La letteratura degli umanisti," in E. Cecchi and N. Sapegno (eds.), *Storia della letteratura italiana* (Milan, 1965–1969), vol. III (1966), pp. 5–353, at 148 [cited in Giacomo Ferraù, "Introduzione," in Paolo Cortesi, *De hominibus doctis* (Palermo, 1979), p. 39]; Michael Baxandall, "Bartholomeus Facius on Painting: A Fifteenth-Century Manuscript of the *De viris illustribus*," *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes*, 27 (1964), pp. 90–107, at 90–97, later integrated into Baxandall, *Giotto and the Orators: Humanist Observers of Painting in Italy and the Discovery of Pictorial Composition, 1350–1450* (Oxford, 1971), pp. 97–111.

<sup>58</sup> Bibliography available in Gabriella Albanese, "Mehrsprachigkeit und Literaturgeschichte im Renaissancehumanismus," in Christiane Maass and Annett Volmer (eds.), *Mehrsprachigkeit in der Renaissance* (Heidelberg, 2005), pp. 23–56, at 24–25, n. 5, who notes, however, that the relevant passage's "Bedeutung bislang noch nicht adäquat gewürdigt wurde" (p. 24). To Albanese's citations should be added Ottavio Clavuot, "Flavio Biondos *Italia illustrata*: Porträt und historisch-geographische Legitimation der humanistischen Elite Italiens," in Johannes Helmrath, Ulrich Muhlack, and Gerrit Walther (eds.), *Diffusion des Humanismus: Studien zur nationalen Geschichtsschreibung europäischer Humanisten* (Göttingen, 2002), pp. 55–76.

<sup>59</sup> E.g., Luca D'Ascia, *Erasmus e l'Umanesimo romano* (Florence, 1991); G.W. Pigman III, "Imitation and the Renaissance Sense of the Past: The Reception of Erasmus' *Ciceronianus*," *Journal of Medieval and Renaissance Studies*, 9 (1979), pp. 155–177; and H.C. Gotoff, "Cicero vs. Ciceronianism in the *Ciceronianus*," *Illinois Classical Studies*, 5 (1980), pp. 163–173.

<sup>60</sup> Nevertheless, they have several times been recognized as a valuable corpus for doing just that. In their introductions and notes to Paolo Cortesi's *De hominibus doctis* and Marcantonio Sabellico's *De latinae linguae reparatione*, Giacomo Ferraù and Guglielmo Bottari, respectively, have given attention to humanist accounts of humanism, mentioning or briefly describing many of the works listed above and comparing them to the texts whose editions they crafted. Neither, however, makes any attempt at synthesis. Similarly, Konrad Krautter has placed Sabellico's *De latinae linguae reparatione* in the same tradition, which he understands more narrowly as the tradition of humanist literary history, and has mentioned the desirability of a close comparison with Cortesi's text – a study which has not yet been undertaken; see Konrad Krautter, "Marcus Antonius Sabellicus' Dialog 'De



Considering how truly undiscovered the country of humanist accounts of humanism is, it has seemed appropriate not to try to survey the whole vast landscape of this literature in a pioneering study but rather to take as deep a view as possible within a logically coherent and historically meaningful panorama. This study will therefore be confined to the more comprehensive accounts from the fifteenth century, from Manetti to Sabellico. The reasons for this have mostly to do with developments within humanism, but also partly with the nature of the sources and partly with the history of scholarship. Regarding the starting point, as discussed above, sources of this kind do not appear until the 1430s, and even the texts by Sicco Polenton, Lapo da Castiglionchio, and Cyriac of Ancona lack the comprehensiveness necessary for sustained and relevant comparison with those of Manetti, Piccolomini, Biondo, and so on. The moment of self-awareness crystallized in these latter authors' works provides a logical first bookend.

Moving to the other chronological terminus, the end of the fifteenth century makes a natural boundary for the present study, as the changes that took place during the sixteenth century make it a separate period worthy of study in its own right. First, that is when humanism ceased to be a distinctly Italian phenomenon. Of course, non-Italians, especially Greeks, played a major role in humanism throughout the Quattrocento. But the Greeks generally adapted themselves to the needs of their Italian students, and the inspiration, sources, and training of northern humanists were primarily Italian. By the Cinquecento many leaders of the movement were based north of the Alps, and from the 1490s on humanist grammatical training was firmly planted in schools outside Italy. The majority of the movement's important figures were non-Italians like Erasmus, Thomas More, Guillaume Budé, and Philipp Melancthon, and the dissemination of humanist writings had undergone a major change: it was now based in international printing centers like Venice and Paris, and later Basel and Lyon. The name of Melancthon calls to mind a larger historical development that also

latinae linguae reparatione': Bemerkungen zur Struktur humanistischer Literaturgeschichtsschreibung," in P. Tuynman, G.C. Kuiper, and E. Kessler (eds.), *Acta conventus neo-latini amstelodamensis: Proceedings of the Second International Congress of Neo-Latin Studies, Amsterdam 19–24 August 1973* (Munich, 1979), pp. 635–646, esp. 635 and 641. These sources have also formed the basis for related studies in Renaissance culture. In the field of literary criticism, for example, M.L. McLaughlin has used many of them to assemble a theretofore missing history of the criticism of Latin literature in the Quattrocento; see McLaughlin, "Histories of Literature in the Quattrocento"; and McLaughlin, "Humanist Criticism of Latin and Vernacular Prose," in *The Cambridge History of Literary Criticism* (Cambridge, 1989–), vol. 2: *The Middle Ages*, eds. Alastair Minnis and Ian Johnson, pp. 648–665. And more recently, these texts have provided the bulk of the evidence for Gabriella Albanese's study of multilingualism in the Renaissance; see Albanese, "Mehrsprachigkeit."



changed the nature of humanism: the Reformation. The vicissitudes of confessionalization, the Inquisition, and the Index turned humanism in different directions, on the one hand harnessing it to the needs of Protestant education, on the other reshaping it by enforcing stricter standards of orthodoxy. Finally, and perhaps most importantly, there was a linguistic shift. The Quattrocento is for all intents and purposes a Latin century in Italy.<sup>61</sup> The ennobling of the vernacular that began with Dante was largely ignored in humanist culture and would not gain strength again until the age of Lorenzo the Magnificent in Florence, and it would not be the dominant literary language until the sixteenth century.<sup>62</sup> By limiting ourselves to the major sources of the fifteenth century we can investigate more profoundly the phenomenon of pre-Reformation, Latinate, Italian humanism.

Finally, a focus on the fifteenth century is desirable in light of this study's underlying motivation, namely to supply a neglected point of view from which to re-evaluate our understanding of the nature of humanism. The Baron thesis relies on events and writings from the turn of the century. Kristeller and Garin parted ways especially over the philosophical status of much fifteenth-century literature. The humanist educational treatises span from 1403 to the end of the 1450s. The lion's share of the evidence for the institutional and professional meaning of the *studia humanitatis* also comes from the Quattrocento, as is the case with the sources adduced by Hanna Gray in her critique of Kristeller. Witt's view, admittedly, is more firmly entrenched in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, but it is just as decisively shaped by developments in the fifteenth. This is the period in which the major interpretations of and debates over humanism are most securely anchored, so this is where it will be most profitable to hear what the humanists themselves have to say.

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Chapter 1 considers together Aeneas Sylvius Piccolomini's and Bartolomeo Facio's *De viris illustribus* and Biondo Flavio's *Italia illustrata*, as all three

<sup>61</sup> *A secolo senza poesia*, according to a view that discounts humanist Latin literature. See Letizia A. Panizza, "The Quattrocento," in Peter Brand and Lino Pertile (eds.), *The Cambridge History of Italian Literature* (Cambridge, 1996), pp. 129–177, at 131; and Martin McLaughlin, "Latin and Vernacular from Dante to the Age of Lorenzo (1321–c. 1500)," in *The Cambridge History of Literary Criticism*, vol. 2, pp. 612–625, esp. at 625: "it must be remembered that the defence of the *volgare* in the Quattrocento was proclaimed by only a few lone voices in a generally hostile environment."

<sup>62</sup> See Angelo Mazzocco, *Linguistic Theories in Dante and the Humanists: Studies of Language and Intellectual History in Late Medieval and Early Renaissance Italy* (Leiden, 1993). But cf. also Mazzocco, "Kristeller and the Italian Vernacular," in Monfasani (ed.), *Kristeller Reconsidered*, pp. 163–181, for a summary and review of Kristeller's important modification of this view.

texts are thematically related and come from roughly the same period. They give a general impression from the 1440s and 1450s of humanism as a movement for the resuscitation of classical, especially Ciceronian, Latin, and the latter two sources also emphasize a more general interest in the arts and culture of classical antiquity. They depict a period of wonder, discovery, recovery of the ancient literary past, and they convey the excitement of individuals who know that they are experiencing (the flourishing of) a revolutionary cultural undertaking in its prime. This chapter provides a kind of baseline, a standard of comparison for other authors and, in light of that comparison, a description of the basic meaning humanism had for a broad group of individuals across Italy in the fifteenth century.

Chapter 2 focuses on Giannozzo Manetti's writings. Although two of them chronologically predate the works of Piccolomini, Biondo, and Facio, their significance will appear more clearly after the discussions of the first chapter. Manetti's writings give special insight into the peculiar way Florentines viewed humanism – a conception that, in light of the other authors considered, turns out not to be as representative of broader trends as the last century of scholarship has led us to expect. Manetti significantly broadens the meaning of the term *studia humanitatis* with respect to the previous authors. To the basic components of Latinity and reverence for antiquity they describe he adds vernacular poetry, a concern for spirituality, and the striving for Christian virtue. Furthermore, he blurs the boundaries between humanism and scholasticism to depict an age of general cultural flourishing. But the most striking aspect of Manetti's humanism is that it is a setting for a kind of lay monasticism, in which a combination of self-abnegation and the study of Latin literature leads to the *beatissima vita*.

Chapters 3 and 4 deal respectively with Paolo Cortesi's *De hominibus doctis* and Marcantonio Sabellico's *De latinae linguae reparatione*, both of which date to the end of the 1480s. Both authors enunciate a triumphant narrative for humanism, portraying their predecessors, as Cicero does in his *Brutus*, as evolutionary stages on the way to the perfection of their own day. For both of them, perfection equals the restoration of classical Latin eloquence.

In Chapter 3 we shall see how Cortesi views humanism as the continuation of an uninterrupted tradition, one that had moved to Greece with the fall of the Western Empire, but now, with the fall of the Eastern Empire to the Ottomans, returned to its home in Italy. Its central project was to restore Latinity to its one-time greatness and purity in Cicero, which Cortesi intimates has happened in Rome in his own day, and for which this very dialogue is perhaps intended as the first sure proof.

Chapter 4 shows how Sabellico, on the other hand, conceives of humanism as a purely homegrown, Italian phenomenon. Like Cortesi he puts the restoration of good Latin style squarely in the middle of the movement, but he considers more authors than Cicero to be worthy of imitation. One of the most interesting aspects of his work is its sophisticated understanding of the mechanisms of cultural and intellectual change, both in the process of Latin's renewal and in the structures necessary to cement it. He pays special attention to the new technology of printing and especially to the flourishing of philology and textual criticism, which he sees as the guarantors of humanism's success. As these topics suggest, to a certain extent Sabellico takes a Venetian point of view.

The object of Chapter 5, finally, is to collate, compare, and contrast the various views of humanism investigated in the previous chapters, and thereby to arrive, to the extent possible, at a synthesis of humanist self-conception in fifteenth-century Italy. The idea is not to take a lowest-common-denominator approach, resting complacent after having found a few mundane things that everyone has in common, like beards on Antonine emperors. My object is to home in on shared traits that the humanists themselves identify as important, as central to their identity as humanists. Furthermore, our line of sight will mainly be trained not down but up: at the cherished goals and ideals the humanists enunciate, and at the activities and structures in everyday life they thought would earn them fame in the great humanist beyond.

When reading these accounts of humanism, we cannot help but be amazed at how greatly they differ from most reigning scholarly interpretations. For when humanists set to recording their own history, they did not describe humanism as a set of institutional disciplines, a political ideology, an activist mentality, a philosophy of life, or a vision of man. They did not describe it as an educational ethos, nor did they necessarily equate it with virtue. On the contrary, at heart it was for them something much more basic, simple, and in our view perhaps unexciting: a linguistic enterprise, its medium Latin, its object eloquence. The primary immediate goal humanists enunciated was the restoration of classical Latin style and the banishment of medieval lexical, grammatical, and syntactical practices.

This sounds remarkably similar to what Hanna Gray told us about humanism a little over fifty years ago. Yet there are very important differences between Gray's view and the one reconstructed here, and grasping them will help us to understand better what it is the humanists thought they were doing. Gray enunciated her theory of humanism as "the pursuit of eloquence" primarily to explain the humanist critique of scholasticism

and to elucidate the nature of humanist work in the realm of philosophy. As she writes,

True eloquence, according to the humanists, could arise only out of a harmonious union between wisdom and style; its aim was to guide men toward virtue and worthwhile goals, not to mislead them for vicious or trivial purposes. It was this conception of eloquence which the humanists placed in opposition to scholastic philosophy.<sup>63</sup>

The alternative they proposed was no philosophical system or program in its own right but rather a rhetorical method that, by playing on the strings of the will while simultaneously pulling on those of the intellect, was more apt to lead their audience to live a good life.<sup>64</sup> The examples Gray gives in the works of Pico, Ermolao Barbaro, Melanchthon, Valla, and Erasmus are all to her significant point, which was a helpful corrective to Kristeller, but that point is only tangentially related to the view of eloquence that, according to our authors, broadly informed humanist identity. First, they never mention wisdom, not even the Catonian commonplace that the rhetorician is the good man speaking well (although they doubtless believed it).<sup>65</sup> Second, they do not claim that eloquence or rhetoric is a mode of philosophizing. Accordingly, Pico and Barbaro do not loom large in their accounts, and Valla, albeit praised for his *Elegantiae* and teaching of Latin, is not memorialized for his ideas. Finally, although our authors did not doubt that eloquence had the persuasive power Gray describes, they promoted it in contradistinction not to arid scholastic philosophy, which, as we shall see in Chapter 2, could even be brought within the humanist fold, but rather to barbaric medieval style in any and all fields of learning and genres of literature. Indeed, philosophy, be it moral or natural, is only one, and hardly the most important, of the many mansions of the word in need of renovation.

The self-conception evinced by our humanist authors manifests the greatest similarities with the theory that humanism was a stylistic ideal, elaborated most clearly and thoroughly by Ronald Witt. In a sense, this study can be thought of as taking up where Witt left off. For he ended

<sup>63</sup> Gray, "Renaissance Humanism: The Pursuit of Eloquence," pp. 498–499.

<sup>64</sup> See *ibid.*, esp. pp. 500–505. See also the related discussions in Kefler, "Renaissance Humanism"; and above all in Salvatore Camporeale's scholarship on Lorenzo Valla and the relationship between rhetoric, philosophy, and theology. For a *summa* of Camporeale's thought, see Camporeale, *Christianity, Latinity, and Culture: Two Studies on Lorenzo Valla*, eds. Patrick Baker and Christopher S. Celenza, tr. Patrick Baker (Leiden, 2014).

<sup>65</sup> Cato the Elder's view of the *vir bonus, dicendi peritus* is recorded in Quintilian, *Institutio oratoria*, 12, 1, 1.

his seminal research into the origins and nature of humanism with the figure of Leonardo Bruni, and it is precisely with Bruni that the accounts considered here tend to start. Thus one of the upshots of this study is to show that the yearning for classical eloquence was not only an impetus to humanism but also that it persisted as the ethos of humanism throughout the fifteenth century.

As the sources examined here consistently imply, argue, or outright assert, this stylistic ideal turns out to be the root of the affinity humanists had for ancient culture in general. That is, it is the Latin language and literature of Roman antiquity that endowed the rest of classical culture with special meaning for the humanists. Thus, they could be attracted to ancient art and architecture, military strategy, political organization, or philosophy, but the urgency they felt in connection with these things, their desire to appropriate and possess them, ultimately stemmed from their passion for ancient language. It bears repeating that this love was directed almost exclusively at classical Latin. As the distinct linguistic hierarchy established in the texts shows, Latin towers above the rest, Greek occupies a distant second place (and is valued mostly as a handmaiden to Latin), while other ancient languages like Hebrew are barely perceptible at the bottom; the vernacular, in contrast, is largely portrayed as unimportant or even as an ignoble competitor. To walk in the footsteps of the ancients meant first and foremost to write Latin like them, or else to contribute to the revival of their language through teaching. These were the marks of a (great) humanist.

Yet the sources do more than give voice to a stylistic ideal. They proclaim a cultural paradigm in which the eloquence of *bonae litterae* has deep, wide, and lasting civilizational consequences. As they testify, the pursuit of eloquence was underlain by profound assumptions about human and cultural excellence, and it was motivated by a desire to equal the perceived greatness of classical, especially Roman antiquity. Our authors enunciate various, overlapping views of what that means and how it should happen, but all agree about the connection, if not the identity, between the language of antiquity and its preeminence, as well as about the imperative of re-establishing both in their own day. For some the humanist project amounted to a renewal of a backward and barbarous Italy, for others it was the path to personal moral perfection. Others, in turn, equated humanism with the fulfillment of individual and collective intellectual potential, whereas others still saw it as a vehicle for Italian cultural coherence and identity, and thus perhaps to a reversal of the peninsula's political fortunes.

Beyond describing humanism as an abstract ideal and a paradigm for cultural flourishing, the sources also portray it as a community of individuals, a coherent group held together by shared personal characteristics, activities, rules of behavior, notions of honor, criteria for inclusion and exclusion, and finally by a sense of belonging to an elite cadre with a distinct history, a clear goal, and a common conviction of the inherent nobility of Latin. Humanism emerges as a widespread movement, not anchored to any one center or clique but diffused in many of Italy's most important cities. This movement was understood to be a distinct cultural entity or pursuit, more or less separate from others like law or medicine or theology. It is generally portrayed as superior to these pursuits, and it is even celebrated as the hallmark of the Renaissance as a whole, the premier manifestation of the new classical orientation of the arts in Italy. Nevertheless, we must be careful when comparing humanism to law or medicine, for none of our authors identifies humanism as either a professional career (like doctor or lawyer) or a defined program of study (like law or medicine), nor does any of them strictly identify it with the five disciplines of the *studia humanitatis* (although the term is used in a general way). For them, being a humanist consisted rather in producing eloquent Latin literature, helping others to do so by teaching, and by competing with others for distinction in these pursuits. It also required, in order to belong to the truly elite group of the illustrious, that one adhere to norms of sociability, and more importantly that one be a man and an Italian, or at least a Byzantine émigré; the inscription above the portal to the higher realms of humanism read "no women or *barbari* allowed." The object of the authors examined in this study was to celebrate the achievements of the greatest humanists, and from their writings emerges a core group of *viri illustres* – what Johannes Helmrath has dubbed the humanist *corona*<sup>66</sup> – that remains remarkably stable throughout the fifteenth century. This group endowed the rest of the humanists with a sense of common history, identity, and orientation. It is their example that the up-and-coming follow, to their reputation and glory they hope to attain.

What is the import of these findings for the fundamental debate in the field, still best encapsulated by the distinct positions of Kristeller and Garin? First, I hope to offer a corrective to what must be recognized as the

<sup>66</sup> Johannes Helmrath, "Streitkultur. Die 'Invektive' bei den italienischen Humanisten," in Marc Laureys and Roswitha Simons (eds.), *Die Kunst des Streitens. Inszenierung, Formen und Funktionen öffentlichen Streits in historischer Perspektive* (Göttingen, 2010), pp. 259–293, at 264–265. See also Harald Müller, *Habit und Habitus. Mönche und Humanisten im Gespräch* (Tübingen, 2006), esp. pp. 55–78.

myopia of the Kristeller thesis. As noted above, Kristeller was strong on *what*, weak on *why*. Thus, regardless of how precisely he described various aspects of humanism, by failing to provide a convincing rationale for it his vision of the whole remains essentially distorted. Emblematic is the *Iter Italicum*.<sup>67</sup> In the process of surveying an unprecedented number of humanistic manuscripts, Kristeller amassed a body of evidence whose enormousness cannot be convincingly accounted for by the professional and disciplinary motives he ascribed in the rest of his scholarship to the codices' authors, scribes, owners, and commissioners. Once we grasp the ethos that informed humanism, however, and especially the humanists' belief in the transformative power, in the civilizational potential, of eloquence, we can immediately make sense of these seven large volumes of tiny print arranged in double columns: they become the embodiment not of thousands of pay-checks or courses of study but of a combined commitment to the Good Life of *bonae litterae*. They are a testament to the vocation of humanism.

If focusing on the ethos expressed by the humanists supplements the Kristeller thesis with missing values and ideas, on the other it tempers the idealism of Garin's interpretation. Garin applied to humanism meta- or trans-historical ideals, thereby explaining it as a stage in the history of philosophy and of human mental evolution across the ages. To be sure, he grounded his interpretation in relevant primary sources, but his selection of these sources can be tendentious, and at decisive moments his evidence is disproportionately Florentine. What my research suggests is that, despite Garin's sensitivity to the grand cultural importance humanists had of themselves and their enterprise, the ideals he latched onto – the awakening of the human mind through a dialogue with the ancients, or the desire to construct a perfect civic community – were not representative of the humanist movement at large. This does not necessarily mean that Garin's insights are invalid with regard to specific texts or on the philosophical plane on which he posited them, but rather that they do not reflect how humanists themselves broadly understood what they were doing, and thus that they are less helpful for understanding humanism historically. If Kristeller's mistake was to ignore the content of humanist thought, one could say that Garin erred by giving greater attention to specific content than to the general form. That is, he underestimated the extent to which the form itself of good letters was what mattered most to humanists – form

<sup>67</sup> Paul Oskar Kristeller, *Iter Italicum: A Finding List of Uncatalogued or Incompletely Catalogued Humanistic Manuscripts of the Renaissance in Italian and Other Libraries*, 7 vols. in 10 (London and Leiden, 1963–1997).



not in a mere aesthetic sense, but as the artful, perfected expression of the human mind, an expression that was capable of effecting meaningful, lasting cultural change, and that, in the eyes of humanists, was a sign that such change might already have come. Thus humanism did constitute a transformational period in human history, but not entirely or exactly as Garin argued.

As should be obvious, this study will not topple these two schools of thought, nor does it intend to do so. On the contrary, it will, if anything, make Kristeller's and Garin's interpretations more meaningful by supplying the deficiencies that significantly weaken them, as well as by showing how they can be approached as complementary. Such reconciliation, however, is not the primary motivation of this book. Instead its aim is to make humanism more comprehensible in its own right: as a stylistic ideal, as a paradigm for personal and cultural excellence, and as a movement made up of a relatively small group of individuals, known to each other and to us, whose powerful vision had an immeasurable impact on contemporaries and posterity. When approached in this way, perhaps humanism will even rise again as a central subject of Renaissance studies and of Western intellectual history. Such is called for, at any rate, by the humanists' own sense of the value of humanism.

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Any study devoted to a reconsideration of the nature of humanism must first confront a central terminological issue. As has long been known, humanists did not actually call themselves "humanists" but instead employed a wide variety of words such as *oratores*, *poetae*, and *litterati*. Therefore the term "humanist" has long been embattled and is now generally used only as a label of convenience by historians.<sup>68</sup> To alleviate some of the embarrassment, one of the aims of this study is to compile

<sup>68</sup> The classic studies on the contemporary validity of the term "humanism" and its cognates are Augusto Campana, "The Origin of the Word 'Humanist,'" *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes*, 9 (1946), pp. 60–73; Paul Oskar Kristeller, "Humanism and Scholasticism in the Italian Renaissance," *Byzantion*, 17 (1944–1945), pp. 346–374, at 366 (reprinted in *Renaissance Thought and its Sources*, pp. 85–105, at 99); and Vito R. Giustiniani, "Homo, humanus, and the Meaning of Humanism," *Journal of the History of Ideas*, 46:2 (1985), pp. 167–195. A recent overview of the meaning of the terms "humanist" and "humanism" is Jean-Louis Charlet, "De l'humaniste à l'humanisme par les humanités: histoire de mots," in Ladislaus Havas and Emericus Tegye (eds.), *Hercules latinus: Acta colloquiorum minorum anno MMIV Aquis Sextiis, sequenti autem anno Debrecini causa praeparandi grandis eius XIII conventus habitorem, quem Societas Internationalis Studii Neolatinis Provehendis diebus 6–13 m. Aug. a. MMVI in Hungariae finibus instituet* (Debrecen, 2006), pp. 29–39. See also Christopher S. Celenza, "Humanism and the Classical Tradition," *Annali d'Italianistica*, 26 (2008), pp. 25–49.

a lexicon of the terms humanists did use. In the meantime, we are stuck with a word, “humanist,” that appears at best to be anachronistic: an overly broad, retrospective application of a title (*umanista*) proper to the educational context of the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries.<sup>69</sup> But the word “humanist” has another defect as well, namely that it admits all too easily of conflation with notions of vague human values or humanitarianism, and for a time it was confused with the modern philosophy of secular humanism – all errors that Paul Oskar Kristeller was especially keen to dispel.<sup>70</sup> In contrast, Kristeller forcefully and vehemently argued that the *humanitas* in *studia humanitatis* has none of these connotations but rather refers to the cultural and especially linguistic refinement offered by the new learning of the Renaissance.<sup>71</sup> Perhaps, however, the problem is even greater. Perhaps it is our very terminological confusion that is responsible, in the words of Ronald Witt, for “the nearly total failure of modern scholars to consider important what the humanists themselves considered the key to understanding their movement.”<sup>72</sup> The solution, I propose, is to take our bearings from the humanists themselves. But who counts as a humanist? About whom should we investigate? Whom should we interrogate? How can we identify humanists qualified to say what humanism was if they did not consistently use a specialized term for one another, thus tipping us off to who was a humanist and who was not?

This sounds like a thorny methodological problem, but actually there has never been any major disagreement, either among modern scholars or among the humanists themselves, as to who made up the core group of the movement, figures like Leonardo Bruni, Antonio Beccadelli, Francesco Filelfo, Lorenzo Valla, Niccolò Perotti, Pomponio Leto, Giovanni Pontano, Angelo Poliziano, as well as all six of our authors. They knew who each other were, were in communication and competition with one another, and in the works to be investigated here certain of them even went through a process of conscious self-reflection on the nature, status, and significance of the entire group. There are disputes on the boundaries, as there always are. Modern scholars will disagree about whether Nicholas of Cusa was a humanist, for example, with Germans taking it for granted and

<sup>69</sup> Campana, “The Origin of the Word ‘Humanist.’”

<sup>70</sup> Kristeller, “The Humanist Movement,” which I have consulted in *Renaissance Thought and its Sources*, pp. 21–32, at 21–23. Cf. Giustiniani, “Homo, humanus,” p. 187. On modern philosophies of humanism, see *ibid.*, pp. 174–183.

<sup>71</sup> Cf. Benjamin Kohl, “The Changing Concept of the *studia humanitatis* in the Early Renaissance,” *Renaissance Studies*, 6:2 (1992), pp. 185–202.

<sup>72</sup> Witt, *Footsteps*, p. 506.

most others scratching their heads. Kristeller and Garin parted ways precisely over the status of individuals like Ficino, Pico, Pomponazzi, Telesio, and Bruno. The humanists themselves, as we shall see, disagreed about Dante, Petrarch, Boccaccio, even about the “Renaissance man” Leon Battista Alberti. Rather than disorienting us, however, these disputes aid in grasping the constitution of the humanist community by the very criteria they adduce for inclusion and exclusion. Discussion and above all disagreement about boundaries, definitions, and norms serves primarily to reinforce, not to undermine them; indeed, it is essential for their very existence.<sup>73</sup>

So the humanist census-taker knows in which neighborhood to look, but how do we know that we are knocking on the right doors? Or on enough doors? Six is a small number, and readers will legitimately wonder if the authors to be studied here are either too few or too idiosyncratic to provide meaningful insight into the nature of such a multifaceted movement as Renaissance humanism. Obviously we cannot be fully sure whether our sample, so to speak, is representative, given the large number of unpublished humanist texts and the manifold nature of all complex historical groups, but we can be relatively certain that the self-conception of humanism reconstructed here is representative of at least a significant, and maybe even the preponderant, segment of the humanist movement. As will become evident throughout the individual chapters, these accounts of humanism are on the whole remarkably similar in their understanding of the movement’s origins and mission. Furthermore, their authors were active in different cities in Italy which just happened to be most of the major centers of humanism: Manetti in Florence, Biondo and Cortesi in Rome, Facio in Naples, and Sabellico in Venice. For his part, Piccolomini provides us with testimony informed by a career that spanned all of Europe and brought him into close contact with many of the temporal and intellectual princes of the day. The geographical and temporal scope will thus be as broad as possible within the parameters set. Moreover, nearly all of our authors were generally recognized by their contemporaries as exemplary humanists and had quite influential voices in their own time: Piccolomini, the international diplomat and then the second humanist pope (as Pius II); Biondo, a leading antiquarian and influential historian; Manetti,

<sup>73</sup> Cf. Alois Hahn, “Transgression und Innovation,” in Werner Helmich, Helmut Meter, and Astrid Poier-Bernhard (eds.), *Poetologische Umbrüche. Romanistische Studien zu Ehren von Ulrich Schulz-Buschhaus* (Munich, 2002), pp. 452–465; Émile Durkheim, *The Rules of Sociological Method and Selected Texts on Sociology and its Method*, ed. Steven Lukes, tr. W.D. Halls (New York, 1982), ch. 3: “Rules for the Distinction of the Normal from the Pathological,” esp. pp. 97–104.

considered by Vespasiano da Bisticci to be the greatest humanist of his age; Cortesi, the new Roman Cicero and a successor to Pomponio Leto's school; Sabellico, the focal point of Venetian humanism at the turn of the sixteenth century. Only Facio was a minor figure in his own time. Still, he acted as official historiographer to Alfonso the Magnanimous in Naples, earned the respect and esteem of greats like Antonio Beccadelli and Poggio Bracciolini, and won the support of many all over Italy in a celebrated dispute with Lorenzo Valla. On the other hand, Facio's lesser stature might actually endow him with greater significance: his is the closest we will get to a bottom-up view of humanism. Is this study focused too much on elites, then? There is always the danger of outliers, but I think it is less acute when trying to grasp the essence of a cultural movement. For it is in the nature of movements that they are led by charismatic captains at the top, not foot-soldiers at the bottom.<sup>74</sup> Thus when orienting himself, Giovanni Umanista likely took his cues less from anonymous notaries and grammar teachers than from the famous individuals he sought to imitate and whose ranks he hoped to join, singular figures like Bruni or Poliziano, Biondo or Piccolomini.

Thus I think this small corpus of works indeed promises a broadly representative view, certainly one broad enough to get us seriously started in re-evaluating the nature of Italian Renaissance humanism. I stress "getting started." For the self-conception these sources embody cannot simply stand alone as a dazzling new definition, one that will outshine the interpretations that now hold sway or that will spread illumination over all the lingering questions. Self-understanding is not necessarily self-knowledge. And even if it were, it would have very limited meaning for us unless informed by scholarship that approaches humanism differently, considering, for example, its social context or penetrating to the deeper meanings of its philosophical literature. The inner narrative of historical actors will never line up with the one the historian constructs, if only because those narratives start and end at different places and aim at answering different questions.<sup>75</sup> Rather, the usefulness of reconstructing the humanists' self-conception lies in recovering a neglected perspective, and moreover one grounded in the period in question, from which to reconsider, challenge, problematize, at times even to overturn – but also to elucidate – what we

<sup>74</sup> Cf. Randall Collins, *The Sociology of Philosophies: A Global Theory of Intellectual Change* (Cambridge, Mass., 1998), esp. pp. 1–53.

<sup>75</sup> Cf. Jonathan Gilmore, *The Life of a Style: Beginnings and Endings in the Narrative History of Art* (Ithaca, 2000), pp. 30–31. This study is an excellent guide to thinking about the inner workings, evolution, beginning, and ending of cultural and artistic movements.

(think we) already know (and will learn in the future) about humanism. The idea is to glimpse the highly subjective world that the humanists saw when they regarded themselves in the cultural mirror. This subjective sense of self, which corresponds perfectly to no world except the interior dimensions of the mind, is the most essential trait to capture. For who we think we are is more important, to us at any rate, than who we actually are (however that might be determined) or how we are perceived by others (although that perception does have an influence). Our self-image, our self-conception, is the cornerstone of our identity. A communist who does not actually achieve the community of goods is still a communist, just as a faltering monk may still seek the kingdom of heaven. When it comes to identity, success in an endeavor, unswerving fealty to ideals in practice, is secondary if not immaterial; one is who one projects oneself to be in one's own mind. Identity is perhaps the only aspect of human life entirely defined by so-called actors' categories.

Reconstructing this identity will supply a necessary term that has long been missing from the humanist equation, one that provides humanism with a rationale and thus endows it with greater intelligibility in itself as well as in the general context of the Renaissance. Authoritative voices have doubted the very possibility of finding a consistent ethos within humanism. Kristeller argued against searching for one within the realm of philosophy, noting dryly, "any particular statement gleaned from the work of a humanist may be countered by contrary assertions in the writings of contemporary authors or even of the same author."<sup>76</sup> More recently, Robert Black has stressed the difficulties inherent in identifying enduring, universal aims of any kind that might characterize Renaissance humanism.<sup>77</sup> Earlier, in what has become the standard overview of humanism in English, he took a sober, down-to-earth approach to crafting a definition, concluding: "a humanist is . . . someone who acts like other humanists; this is how contemporaries would have identified humanists, and such a definition, stripped of historicist paraphernalia, will work equally well for us."<sup>78</sup> But what does it mean to act like a humanist, to do humanism? Does it simply mean to be employed like other humanists, to write Latin like they did, to

<sup>76</sup> Kristeller, *Renaissance Thought and its Sources*, p. 32 (from the essay "The Humanist Movement," at end). Quoted in Gouwens, "Perceiving the Past," pp. 58–59, n. 11; Gouwens' general discussion is relevant.

<sup>77</sup> Robert Black, "The Renaissance and the Middle Ages: Chronologies, Ideologies, Geographies," in Alexander Lee, Pit Péporté, and Harry Schnitker (eds.), *Renaissance? Perceptions of Continuity and Discontinuity in Europe, c.1300–c.1500* (Leiden, 2010), pp. 27–44, esp. 27–29.

<sup>78</sup> Black, "Humanism," p. 252.

have a similar education? Or did it entail something more sublime as well? Surely it comprehended being motivated by similar ideals, sharing a sense of belonging to a specific cultural undertaking. Acting like a humanist did not only mean engaging in behavior typical of humanists; it also meant acting on a set of shared assumptions, assumptions about the value of what one was doing and its place in the culture of the age and in human history. This ethos may be difficult to find. It may be less strictly defined or less philosophical than we might like. It may look so different from what we expect that we do not recognize it as such. I believe it has been lurking in places where most scholars have not yet deigned to look. But find it we must, for without accounting for this component, any definition of humanism will be incomplete if not distorting. To say that humanists worked in chanceries, wrote classicizing Latin, espoused a certain form of education, convinced elites of the normative value of antiquity – but without saying *why* they thought any of this was worth doing – would be like minutely describing the Catholic Eucharist without mentioning that the priest considers it “the source and summit of the Christian life”: the worship of God and the refreshment of the human soul would appear as an inexplicably intricate, deeply unsatisfying alimentary ritual.<sup>79</sup> If this study aspires to anything, it is to breathe some of the spirit back into the body, to assist in re-endowing the creature of Italian Renaissance humanism with life.

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As a final note, I would like to mention two important studies of obvious relevance to the themes of this book that appeared too late to be taken into consideration: Brian Maxson’s monograph *The Humanist World of Renaissance Florence*, and Clémence Revest’s article “La naissance de l’humanisme comme mouvement au tournant du XV<sup>e</sup> siècle.”<sup>80</sup> Both approach humanism from a sociological standpoint and thus form a contrast (but also a complement) to my own work. The reader is enthusiastically referred to these insightful studies.

<sup>79</sup> *Catechismus Catholicae Ecclesiae* 1324 (pars secunda, sectio secunda, caput primum, articulus 3: “sacramentum eucharistiae”): “fons et culmen vitae ecclesialis.”

<sup>80</sup> Brian Maxson, *The Humanist World of Renaissance Florence* (Cambridge, 2014); Clémence Revest, “La naissance de l’humanisme comme mouvement au tournant du XV<sup>e</sup> siècle,” *Annales: Histoire, Sciences sociales*, 68:3 (2013), 665–696.